

The 
CONNECTED
Generation 

**How Christian Leaders Around the World Can
Strengthen Faith & Well-Being Among 18–35-Year-Olds**

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Preface

BY MICHAEL MESSENGER



MICHAEL MESSENGER

President and CEO
World Vision Canada

Imagine you could sit in a room with a group of 18–35-year-old young adults and ask them questions about what makes them tick. What worries them? What do they think about faith and the Church? What repels them from and what draws them into local congregations? How can we connect and work alongside them to live out the mission of the Church in today's world?

That is the conversation you are holding in your hands. World Vision partnered with Barna Group, a leader in research into faith and culture, and conducted in-depth surveys of more than 16,000 adults ages 18 to 35 years old in 25 countries around the world, including Canada.

The goals, fears, relationships, routines and beliefs of Generation Z and Millennials were explored in nine languages across the globe. More than 2,000 Canadian young adults participated in the survey, and those insights are highlighted for you in this report.

It is fascinating to see how the experience of Canadians fits into the larger, global picture of an age

group we discover is both anxious and optimistic; suspicious of the Church but surprisingly open to spirituality and religion; and universally and deeply concerned about the state of the world. They yearn to make this place better for all of its citizens.

The research in *The Connected Generation* is so practical. It is truly designed and presented to help Christian leaders listen to and better understand 18–35-year-old adults – an age group some of us have at times found elusive and maybe even a little bit mysterious.

I appreciate that the report is set out as a 'field guide', orientating us to where we are, and then encouraging us to ask questions about how to move

‘HEALTHY LOCAL CHURCHES HAVE THE POTENTIAL
TO BE BEAUTIFUL CONDUITS OF LOVE, JUSTICE,
HEALING AND RECONCILIATION’.

forward in partnership with this unique generation. We have so much to learn from the world’s first digital natives, raised with an unprecedented level of connectivity, who are also refreshingly frank about their needs, desires and ideas.

Because of the timing of the release of this report, the researchers were also able to explore how COVID-19 shaped the lives of this cohort, including their desire to attend church online and return (or not) to church when it is back in person. This is brand new research that can help all of us, especially church leaders exploring how to encourage people back to church after COVID-19, and how to be faithful to our mission in Canada and beyond in this unique time.

For World Vision, being faithful to our mission has always meant working alongside the

Church to address poverty and injustice. I believe that healthy local churches lived out in communities around the world have the potential to be beautiful conduits of love, justice, healing and reconciliation.

This research is an invitation to explore how we can invite young adults into church communities that share their amazing gifts, engage our world and make us all stronger and better by their presence. ●

MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTED GENERATION

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY'S SAMPLE BY REGION AND COUNTRY

For more than a decade and across multiple projects, Barna Group has kept a close eye on the generation known as Millennials (defined in the United States as those born between 1984 and 1998). We've watched them navigate new technology, develop passions for community and justice, and balance particularly high ideals and ambitions. Our recent research has tracked their entrance into adulthood, career and family – and, among a

significant proportion, a simultaneous departure from religion. We see similar trends now among the leading edge of Gen Z (born between 1999 and 2015), who, so far, are even less inclined toward religion than their Millennial peers.

Barna partnered with World Vision, a leading voice in global activism with a shared vision of engaging the next generation, to dramatically widen – and focus – the lens with which we view

THIS REPORT REPRESENTS
A COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY
OF THE FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO
CANADA.

The sample includes:

- **16,383** adults ages 18 to 35 in **25** countries
- **8,345** males and **7,978** females (60 'Other / Prefer not to respond')

NORTH AMERICA

4,014

United States 2,000
Canada 2,014

LATIN AMERICA

2,105

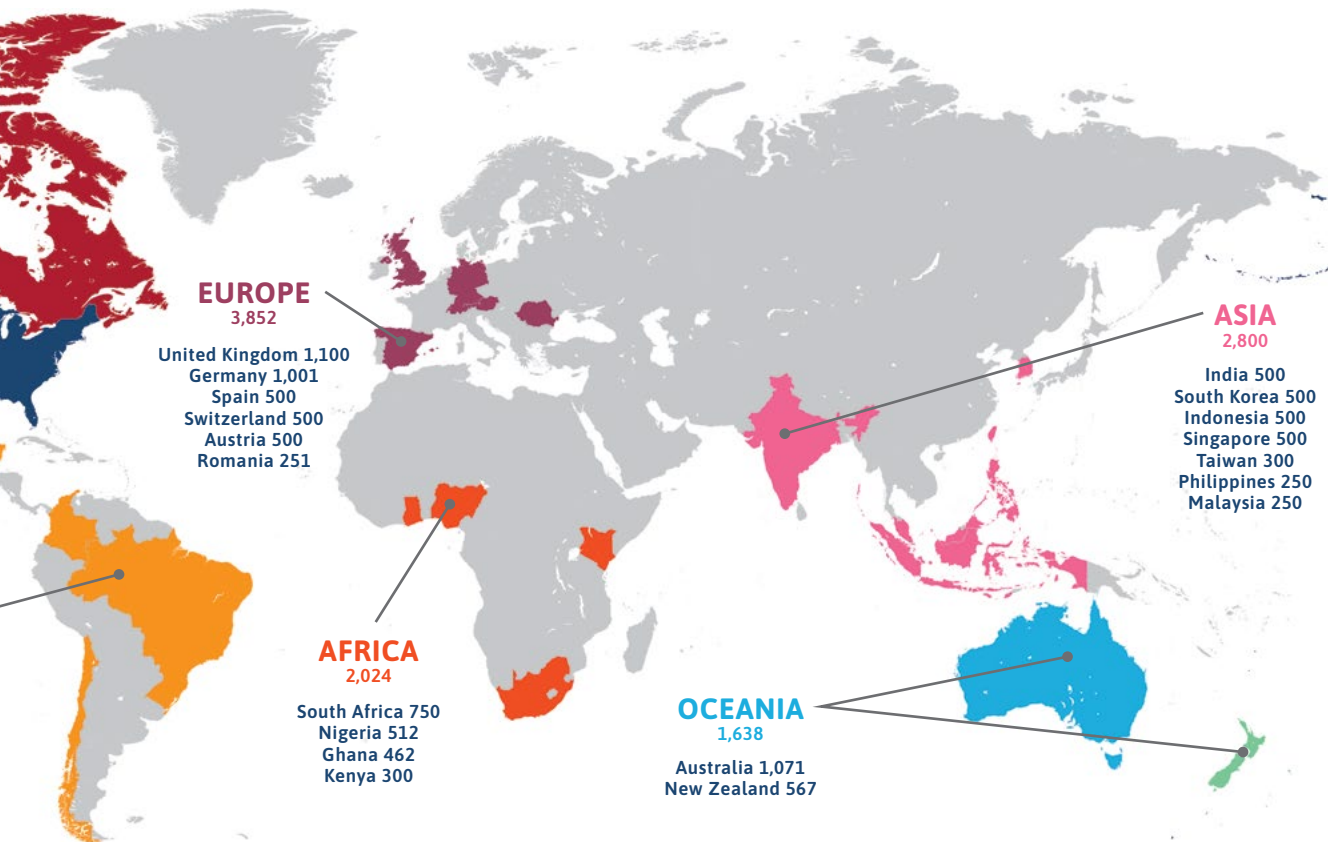
Brazil 1,005
Mexico 500
Colombia 300
Chile 300

young adults around the world. We interviewed more than 16,000 adults ages 18 to 35 in 25 countries and nine languages, asking them about their goals, fears, relationships, routines and beliefs. This report represents a comprehensive summary of the findings specific to Canada.

Though some themes vary by country and context, there are other similarities across borders. In the following pages, you'll meet maturing respondents who don't just want to be 'reached' – they want to be involved and make a difference. Many of these driven adults are wary and weary, wrestling with questions, longing for deeper relationships and facing significant societal,

professional and personal obstacles. Yet we see that faith is one important factor associated with their well-being, connection and resilience. When – or, for many, if – they walk into a church, they'll need concrete teaching from leaders they can trust and meaningful opportunities to contribute to a faith community.

Through this report, Barna's aim is not only to help the global Church to better understand 18–35-year-olds around the world, but to truly partner with them in discipleship and activate them in leadership. We invite you to join us in learning more about, and from, this connected generation. ●



RETURNING TO THE CONNECTED GENERATION

WHY WE COLLECTED MORE DATA

All data is influenced by the time and place it is collected. In order to reveal what may have changed since the original data collection in 2019, World Vision Canada and Bar-na Group collected more data from Canadian 18–35-year-olds in 2021. *The Connected Gen-*

eration is more than a research report or dataset; it is a representation of three realities we believe are at the heart of understanding, supporting and leading the next generation.

Life in an Anxious Age teaches us that this generation needs an emotionally connected



THIS SAMPLE INCLUDES:

1,000 ADULTS AGES 18 TO 35 IN 2019

1,014 ADULTS AGES 18 TO 35 IN 2021

Church. *The Connected Generation* reported that, globally, one out of five young adults (22%) struggles with signs of anxiety. Although not every young adult personally struggles with mental health, most know someone who does and all live in an increasingly emotionally connected world.

Engagement with Spirituality and Church sheds light on the changing landscape of how young adults see and relate to spirituality, religion and Christianity. Many of our assumptions about how people perceive the Christian Church no longer hold true. We can equip ourselves to anticipate and respect young adults' perspectives by taking time to hear from them.

Potential for Impact reminds us of the all-

too-often untapped potential of today's young adults. They have an innate desire to make meaningful contributions to the world. Recognising how they would like to get involved, both inside and outside of the Church, allows us to build them up as leaders.

Take a moment to reflect on the data below. In the spring of 2021, a year into the COVID-19 response, when 18–35-year-old Canadian churchgoers were asked 'what types of support do you need from your church this week?' three themes rose to the top: connection, spirituality and impact. Before and after the pandemic, our research and these focuses deepen our ability to meet young adults where they are.

WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORT DO YOU MOST NEED FROM YOUR CHURCH THIS WEEK?



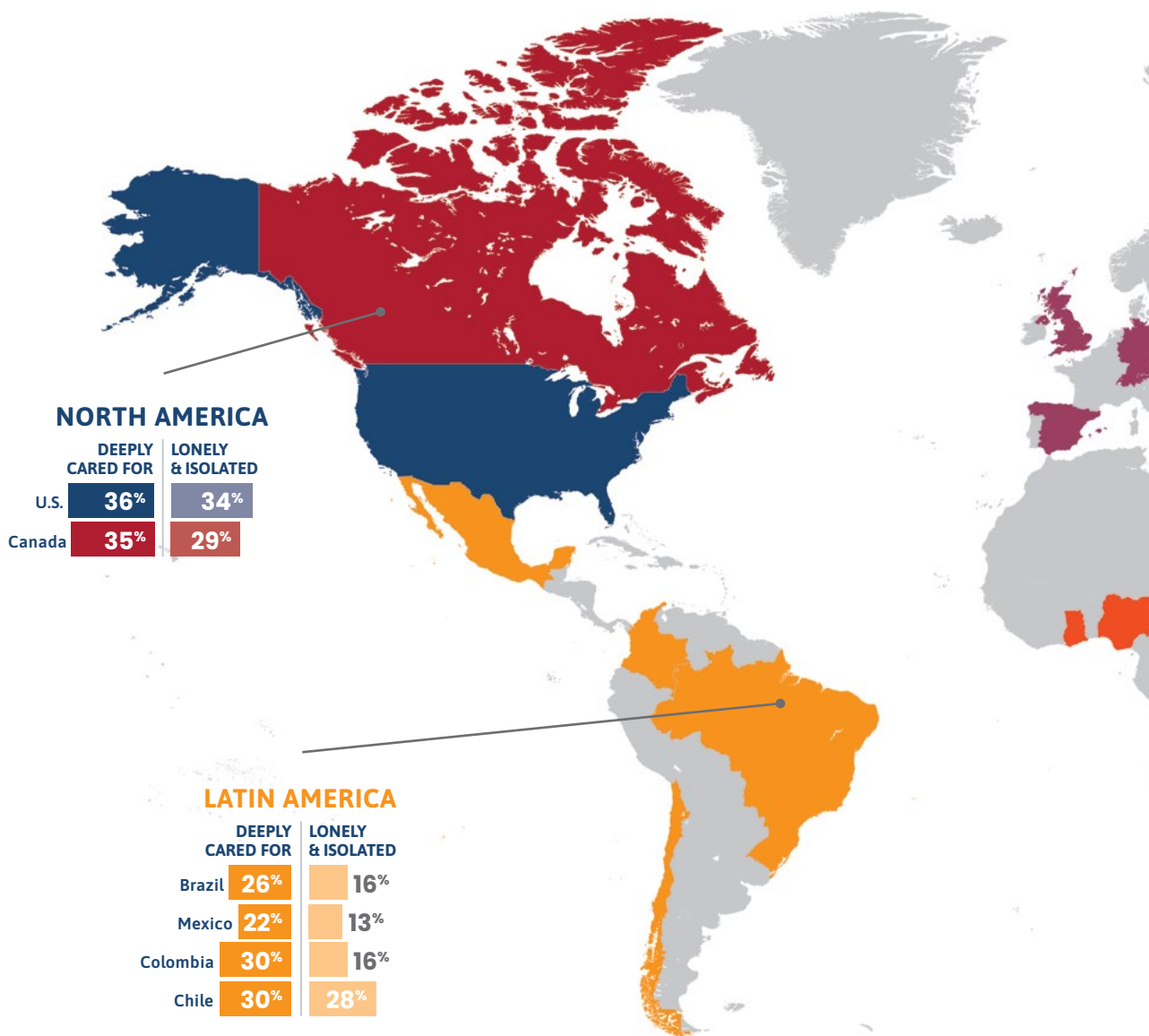
n=372 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who attend church at least once every six months, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

SECTION ONE

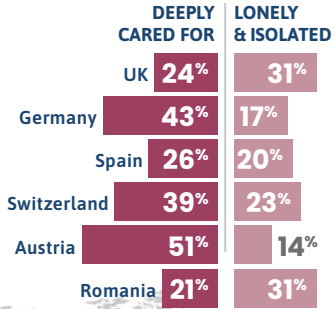
LIFE IN AN ANXIOUS AGE

A CONFLICTED
EXPERIENCE OF
CONNECTIONS

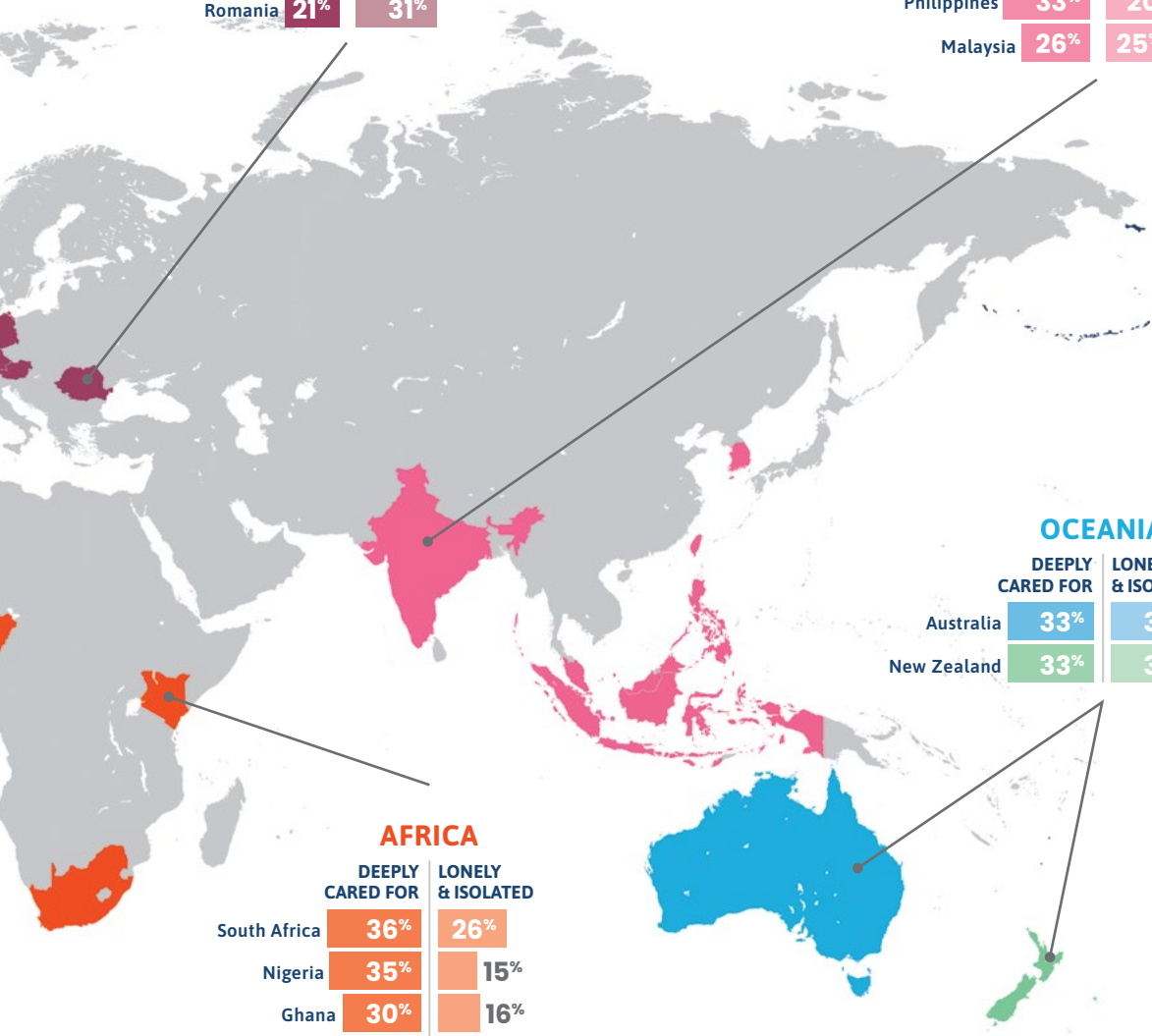
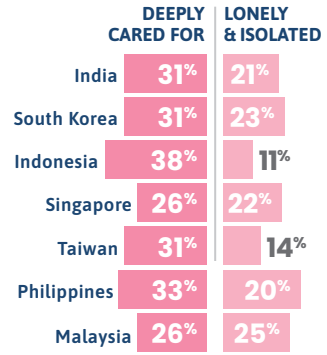

'I often feel ...'



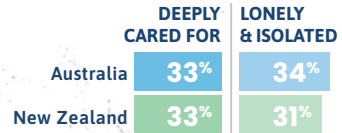
EUROPE



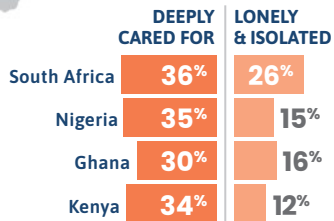
ASIA



OCEANIA



AFRICA



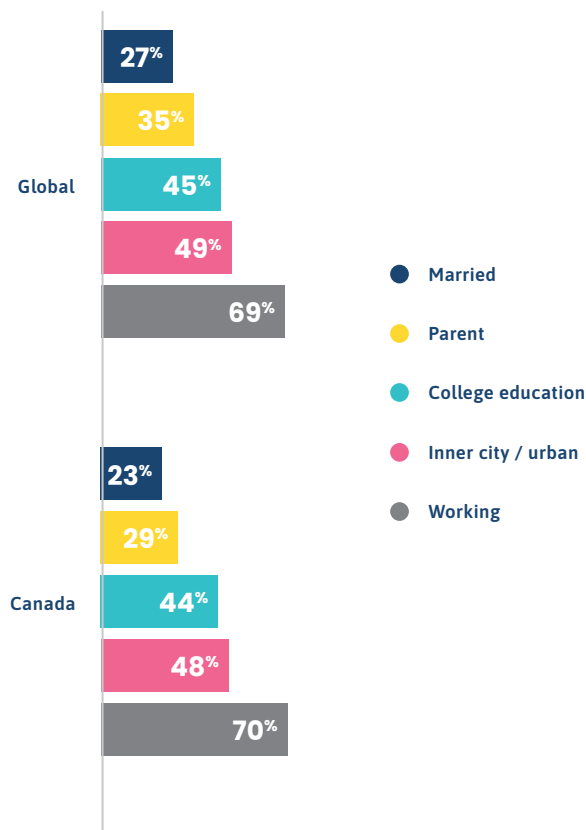
A Global & Local Profile of Young Adults

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF A TRULY GLOBAL GENERATION

Eighteen–35-year-olds around the world follow many of the same trends in terms of stage of life. The priority of their early adulthood has been establishing themselves financially and professionally, as many delay getting married or having children. For most of the generation, family follows career and education. Young adults value building their vocational foundation before turning toward home.

IN TERMS OF THEIR STAGE AND PLACE IN LIFE, CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS CLOSELY MATCH THE GLOBAL PROFILE

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AMONG 18–35-YEAR-OLDS



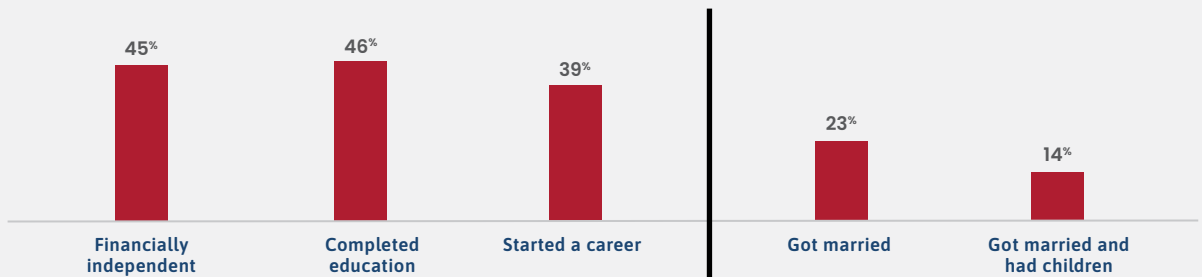
n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,000 in Canada and 2,000 in the United States), 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

Looking ahead, young adults point to goals centred around personal development, family and following their dreams. Home ownership, marriage and parenting all rise in importance.

Entrepreneurship also emerges as a primary goal, likely tied to the emphasis on finishing education, starting a career and gaining financial independence. ●

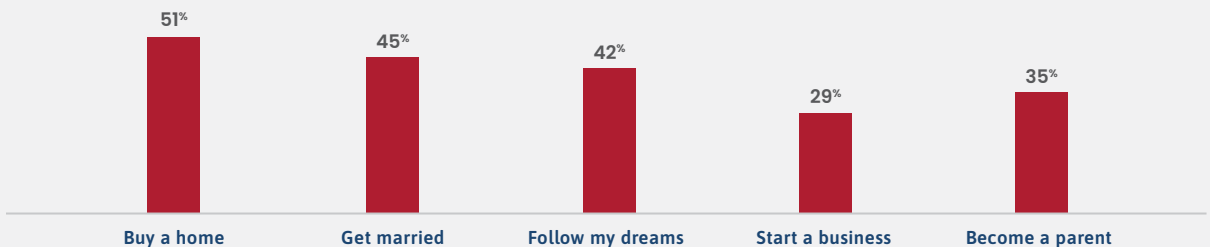
ACCOMPLISHMENTS THUS FAR EMPHASISE FOUNDATIONAL MILESTONES

What have you accomplished?



FUTURE GOALS SHIFT TOWARD THE PERSONAL

What would you like to accomplish in the next 10 years?



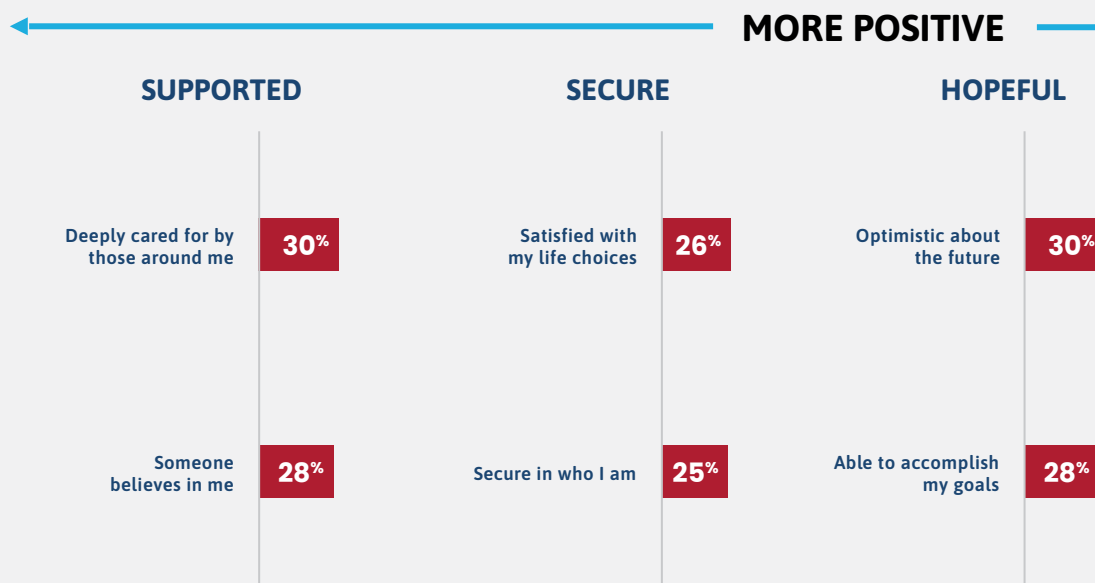
An Age of Anxiety

A GENERATIONAL STRUGGLE TO BALANCE HOPE & ANXIETY

LONELINESS IS A CRISIS. THREE OUT OF FOUR SAY THEY FEEL LONELY AT LEAST DAILY, AND 38% OF THAT GROUP SAY THEIR LONELINESS IS UNBEARABLE.

THE EMOTIONAL PORTRAIT OF YOUNG ADULTS

'I often feel ...'

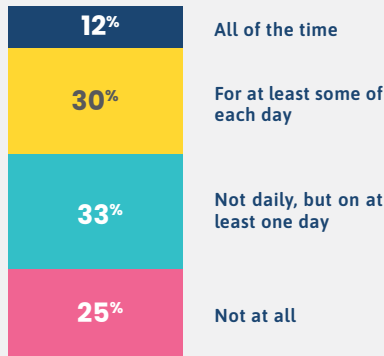


What is the emotional climate of this connected generation? Their self-reported feelings indicate some serious challenges come from within; inner battles with anxiety and fear often exceed levels of hope or optimism and hinder the well-being of young adults.

Since 2019, these numbers have gone largely unchanged. The most significant changes have been a 9 percentage point decrease in 'optimistic about the future' and a 7 percentage point decrease in 'deeply cared for by those around me'. ●

LONELINESS IS A DAILY EXPERIENCE ...

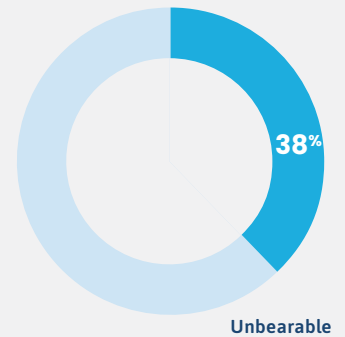
Think back on your past 7 days. How often would you say you felt lonely?



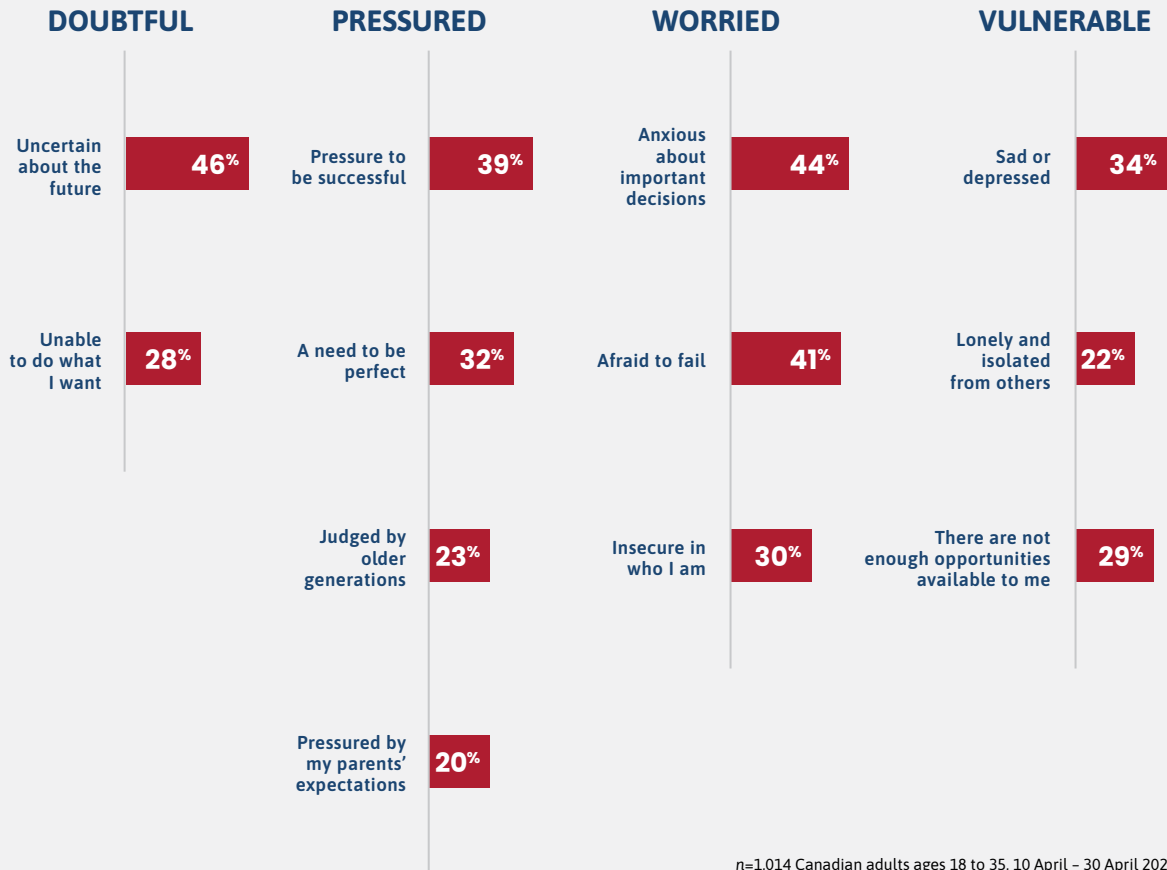
... THAT TENDS TO BE UNBEARABLE

How painful would you say your feelings of loneliness were?

Base: those who said they feel lonely at least weekly



MORE NEGATIVE



n=1,014 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 10 April - 30 April 2021.

FIELD GUIDE ①: Life in an Anxious Age

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH

In this connected generation, pessimism about the future runs rampant, fears and worries drive decisions, and isolation and loneliness are creating a significant population of people who feel they have to make it on their own. This field guide will help you and your team think through how some of these concerns might be answered by your specific community. In other words, this guide is designed to help your church better discern how it might *be* the Church in your specific context.

This guide will be best read through as a team or presented to a team – no individual church leader ought to try to answer generational problems on their own! As you read through these questions and begin to form a plan for your church, consider the giftings of your community and how those might address some of the real needs that young adults have.

Guiding questions

As you begin, answer the following questions:

- What are your thoughts and feelings after reading this section? Does it reflect the reality you've seen and experienced in your own context? How so, or how did it differ?
- If 44 percent of young people in your surrounding culture often feel anxious about decisions, what might be some reasons for this anxiety? How does that mirror or stand in contrast to fears expressed by other generations in your community or congregation? Where might the wisdom of the past have something to offer to young adults, and where might new strategies be needed?
- Connection to others is a clear felt need for many people in the 18–35-year-old age range. In what ways do you think your church or

gathering is equipped to address this need? What are some other ways you might be able to more intentionally answer this need?

Forming a plan

Young adults who are anxious may be predisposed to seek out community. Additionally, Barna's research shows, connectivity for young adults is a key factor in their optimism about the world, and in feeling cared for. These two factors are intimately related, and your expression of the local church is uniquely suited to help 18–35-year-olds navigate challenges to well-being.

Cultivating connection

If a young adult feels they're facing an uncertain reality with no support and a limited amount of opportunity, it's no wonder they feel anxious about the future. The Church is called by God to address this disconnection. A participant in your community ought to have immediate access to multi-generational connection and shared purpose. This won't make anxiety disappear, but the call of Christ is one that provides connection to a larger body and a hope that perseveres in spite of an uncertain future. If disconnection may be a root cause of young adults' anxiety and pessimism about the future, then the relationship and connections offered by church communities may be a potent antidote.

For this antidote to work, you'll need to ensure connection can flourish within your context. And here, it's best to take a hard look at what your church offers to young adults and where you have room to grow.

Multi-generational wisdom: One source of connection may be the older adults in your church, who can offer wisdom and discernment to the young adults in your midst. Avoid being patronising or dismissive to the concerns of the young adults in your context –

inside or outside of your church community – and instead focus on real relationships and deep connections between people of different ages and experiences. Practice listening, understanding and cultivating a community of compassion and empathy.

Bearing burdens, navigating milestones:

Research shows that many 18–35-year-olds are hoping for vocational security before marrying, having children or home ownership. While these markers are of course not necessary for any person – much less any Christian – they are still fraught for people trying to navigate them alone. Your community can help young adults find a sense of stability and discern how best to pursue their hopes (or discern to change those hopes!), while offering a safe, helpful place to do the hard work of discernment. For instance, if someone in your context is burning out or fearful about making a marriage commitment or having children because of financial stressors, provided those desires are not counter to God’s call, your church could help bear financial burdens or provide / offer marital guidance, childcare or other practical aid.

Common purpose: At their best, church communities provide a sense of purpose and meaning to all participants in their community and invite outsiders into a shared sense of mission. While this has value to everyone, it may hold particular meaning for a generation where many feel an acute lack of connection to a larger purpose or community. Discern how your church’s mission is invitational and aspirational, and how you can disciple people in your church context into a welcoming community that fosters connection and hope. ●

HOW CAN YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY BE AN ANSWER FOR THE FOLLOWING FEELINGS REPORTED BY MANY YOUNG ADULTS?

‘I’m uncertain about the future’

‘I feel pressure to be successful’

‘I feel sad or depressed’

‘I’m afraid to fail’

‘I feel anxious about important decisions’

SECTION TWO

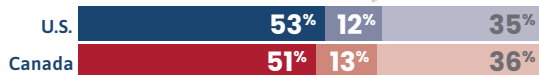
ENGAGEMENT WITH SPIRITUALITY & THE CHURCH

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ACROSS THE CONNECTED GENERATION

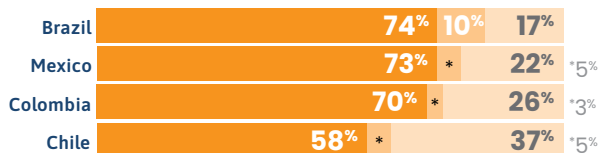


CHRISTIAN | OTHER FAITH | ATHEIST, AGNOSTIC, NO FAITH

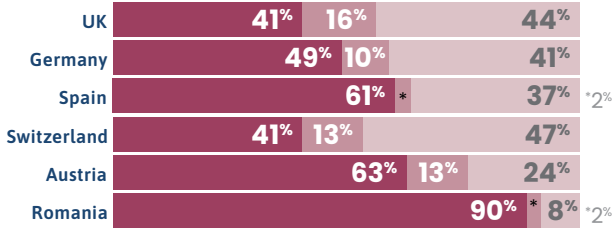
NORTH AMERICA



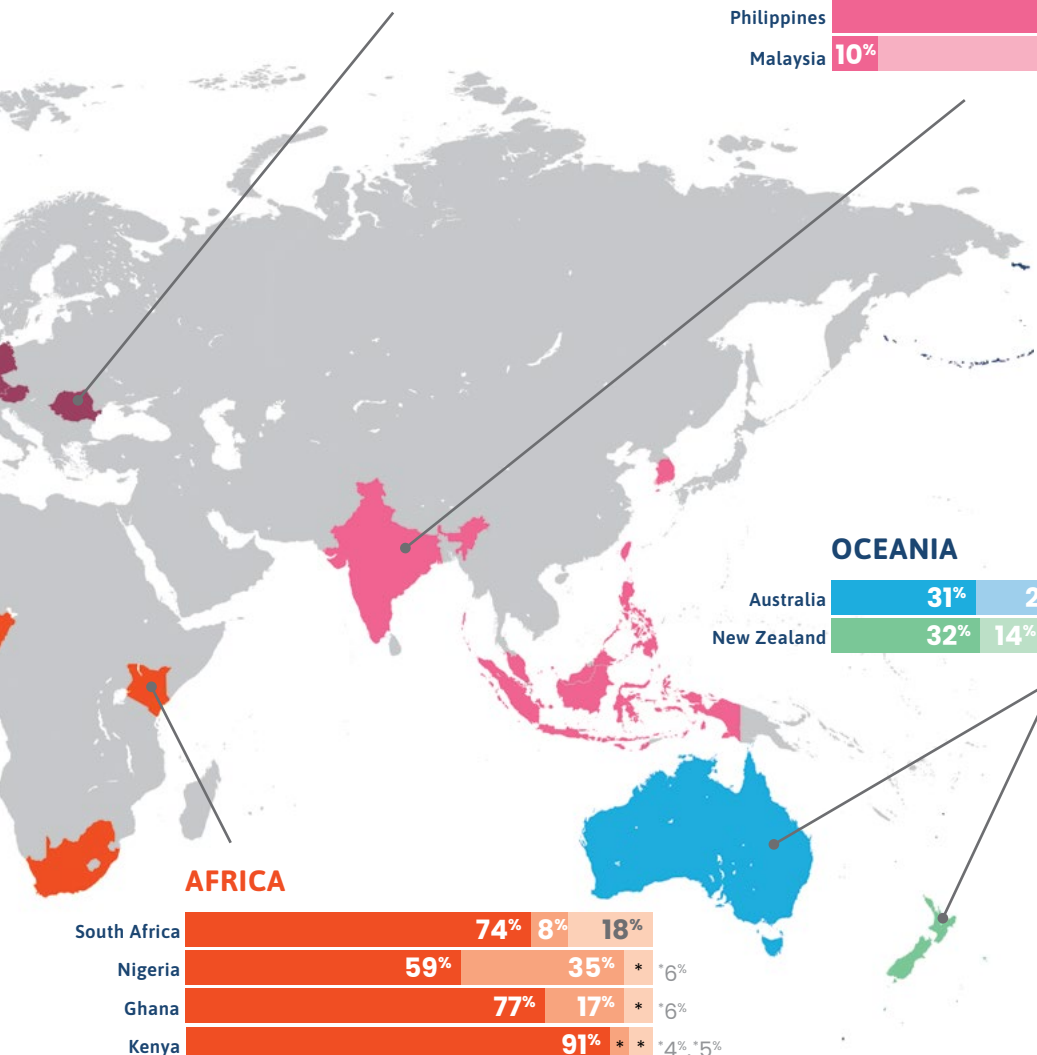
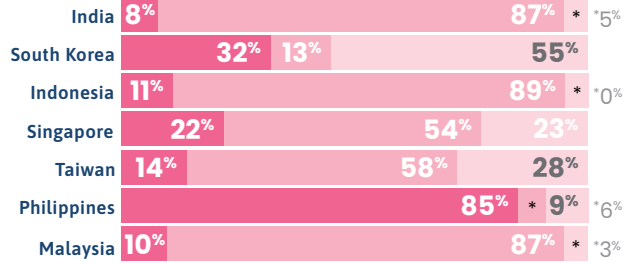
SOUTH AMERICA



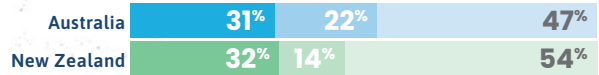
EUROPE



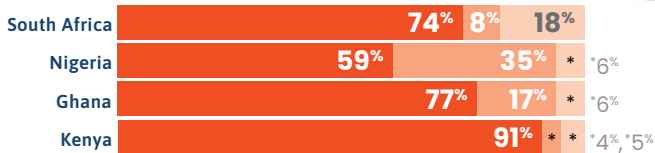
ASIA



OCEANIA



AFRICA



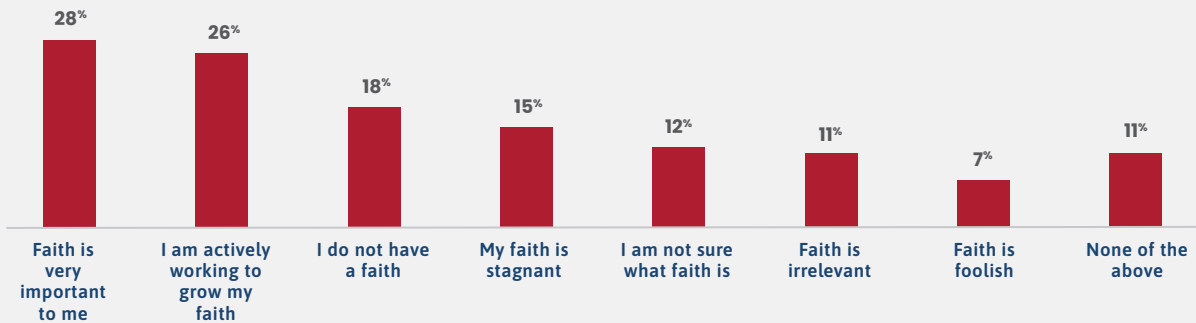
Relationship to Faith

THE SPIRITUALLY OPEN STANCE OF THE CONNECTED GENERATION

DESPITE BEING A GENERATION OFTEN CHARACTERISED AS ANTAGONISTIC TO RELIGION, THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG ADULTS (INCLUDING IN CANADA) IS QUITE CONFIDENT IN THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITUAL FORCES

CANADIANS' OPINIONS OF FAITH VARY

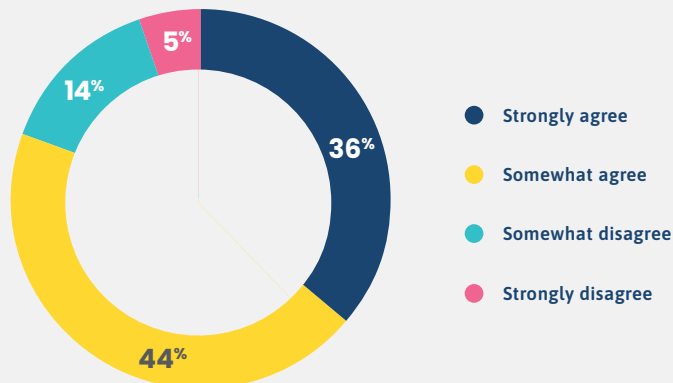
Which of these statements do you most agree with?



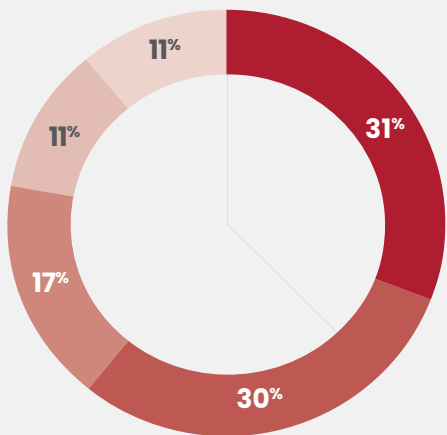
AND MOST CANADIAN CHRISTIANS AGREE THEIR FAITH IS IMPORTANT

'My religious faith is very important in my life today'

Base: Canadians who self-identify as Christian



MOST YOUNG ADULTS BELIEVE IN SPIRITUAL FORCES



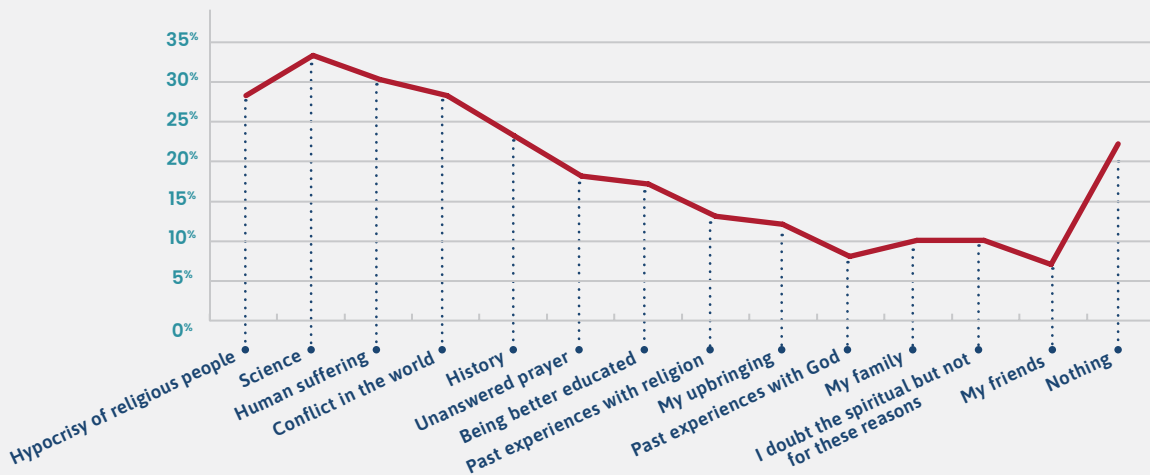
Only about one out of 10 is completely certain spiritual forces do not exist. Young adults' feelings toward faith specifically are more complex, but they lean toward seeing religion as good and important. ●

Do you believe in spiritual forces?

- Yes, I am certain they exist
- I think they exist but I'm not sure
- I do not know if spiritual forces exist
- I don't think they exist, but it's possible
- No, I do not believe spiritual forces exist

... BUT ARE STILL WRESTLING WITH SIGNIFICANT DOUBTS*

What makes you doubt things of a spiritual dimension?



n=1,014 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 10 April – 30 April 2021.
*n=1,000 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

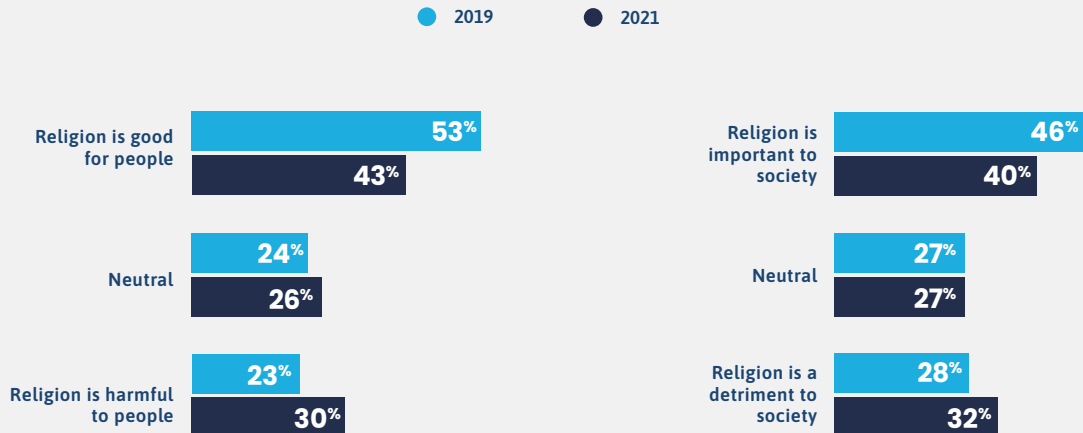
The Church's Mixed Reputation

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERSONAL FAITH & PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND THE CHURCH

While the majority of Canadian young adults who self-identify as Christian agrees that their religious faith is important (76% in 2019 and 80% in 2021), negative perceptions of religion and the Christian Church have intensified since 2019. The proportion of Millennial Christians who feel the Christian Church is 'harmful' or 'detrimental' has doubled. ●

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF RELIGION SUGGEST A DEEPENING AMBIVALENCE...

In general, what is your perception of religion?



Religion is important to society

46%

40%

Neutral

24%

26%

Neutral

27%

27%

Religion is harmful to people

23%

30%

Religion is a detriment to society

28%

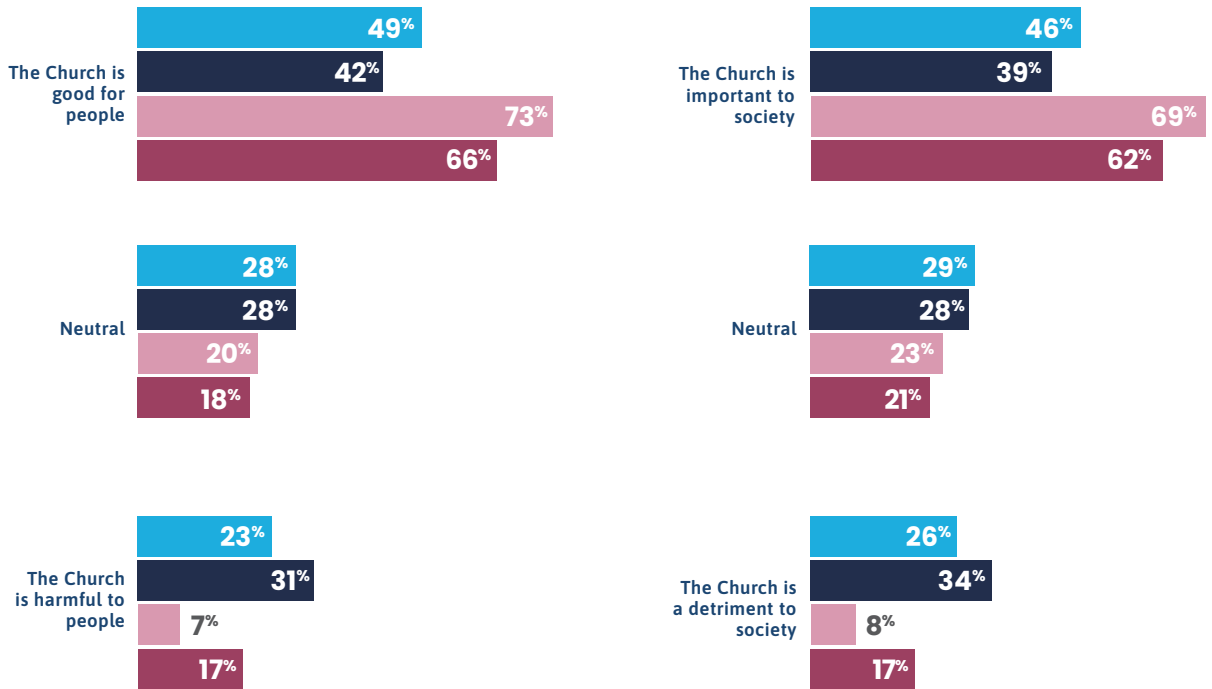
32%

OPINIONS OF RELIGION, THE CHURCH AND FAITH PRESENT CLEAR DIVIDES, EVEN AMONG CHRISTIANS

.. AND OPINIONS OF THE CHURCH ARE DECLINING AMONG BOTH THE GENERAL POPULATION AND CHRISTIANS

In general, what is your perception of the Christian Church?

- 2019 Canadian adults
- 2021 Canadian adults
- 2019 Christians
- 2021 Christians



n=1,014 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 10 April – 30 April 2021.
n=1,000 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

Resilient Discipleship & the Impact of Church

SIGNS OF DEEP, LASTING FAITH AMONG THE CONNECTED GENERATION

In *Faith for Exiles*, Barna president David Kinman examines four groups who grew up with Christian backgrounds. *The Connected Generation* extends those categories across 25 countries and observes similar groups and patterns of Christian faithfulness around the world, among:

Prodigals – grew up Christian but no longer identify themselves as Christian.

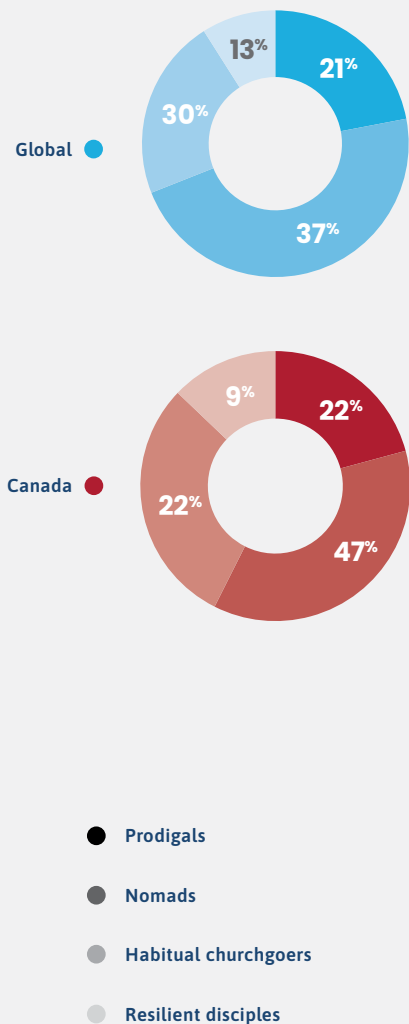
Nomads – identify as Christian but do not regularly attend church.

Habitual churchgoers – identify as Christian and attend church at least once a month, but do not qualify as resilient disciples.

Resilient disciples* – identify as Christian and (1) attend a local church regularly and engage with their faith community above and beyond worship services; (2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible; (3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm his death and resurrection; and (4) express a desire for their faith to impact their words and actions. ●

ABOUT ONE OUT OF 10 CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS WITH A CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND IS A RESILIENT DISCIPLE TODAY. MOST OF THIS GROUP ARE NOMADS, STILL AFFILIATING WITH THE CHURCH ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT ENGAGED.

*See methodology on page 46 for sample details.

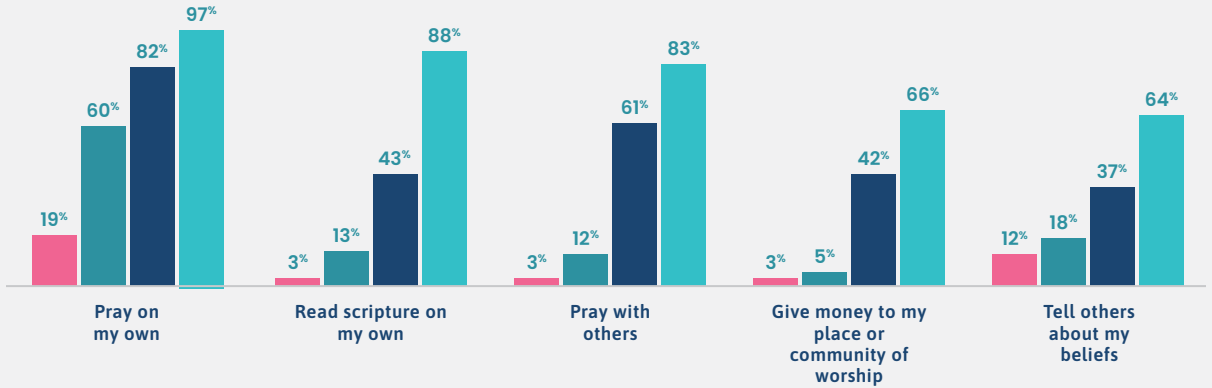


n=9,787 adults ages 18 to 35 who grew up with some type of Christian background (including 659 in Canada), 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

PRAYER & SCRIPTURE ARE A FOUNDATION OF RESILIENCE

'At least once a month I, ...'

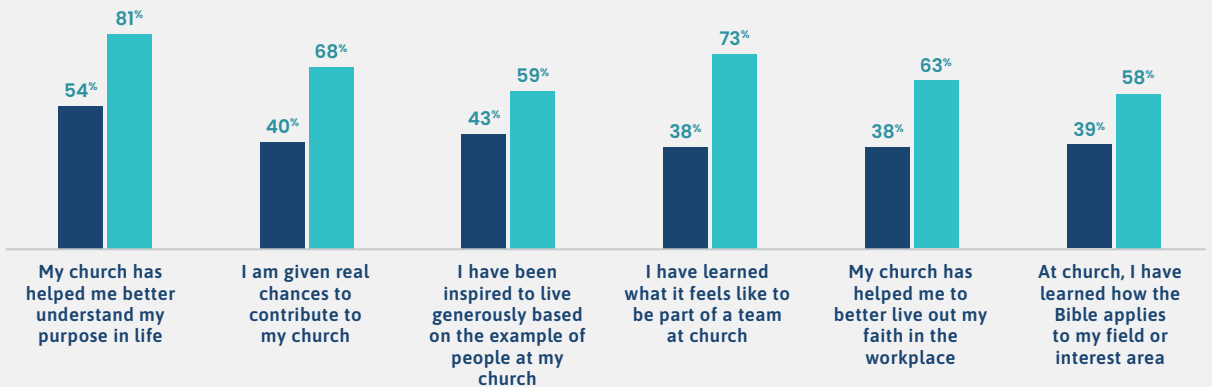
● Prodigals ● Nomads ● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



n=659 adults ages 18 to 35 in Canada who grew up with some type of Christian background, 4 December 2018 - 15 February 2019.

CHURCH IS DEEPLY IMPACTFUL ON IDENTITY & VOCATION

● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



n=201 adults ages 18 to 35 in Canada who have attended a Church in the past month, 4 December 2018 - 15 February 2019.

Goodness, Truth & Today's Culture

HOW YOUNG CHRISTIANS ADULTS SEE RELIGION IN A CHANGING WORLD

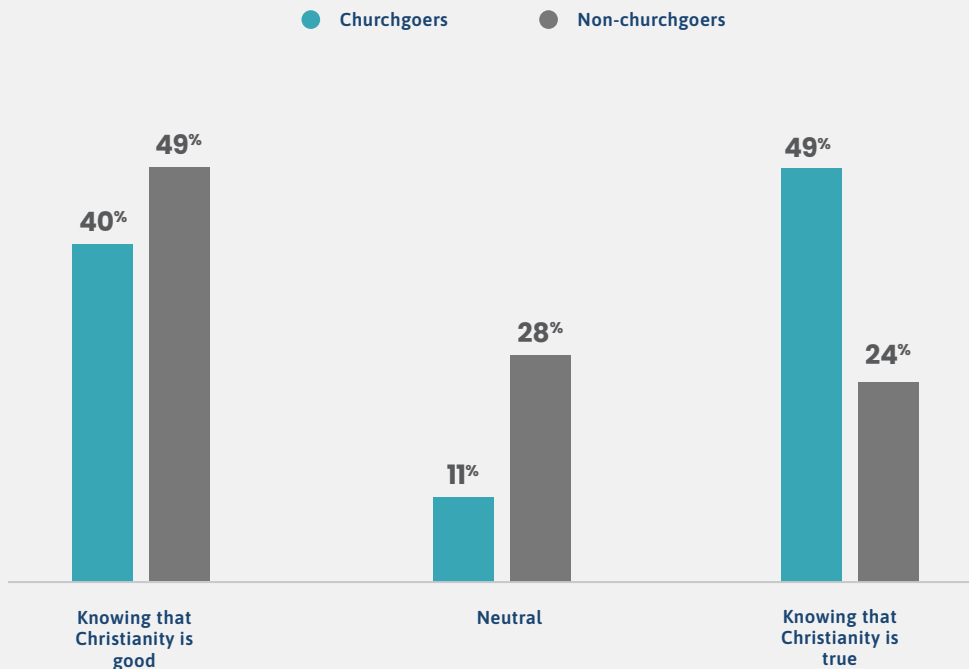
To young adults, is it more important for Christianity to be seen as true or as good? Churchgoers are fairly divided, while half of Christians who are unengaged with a church say it is more important that Christianity is good.

As a whole, young adults are skeptical of religion's role in today's culture. ●

NON-CHURCHGOERS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN KNOWING THAT CHRISTIANITY IS GOOD THAN KNOWING IT IS TRUE

Considering your faith, between the following statements, which is more important to you?

Base: self-identified Christians



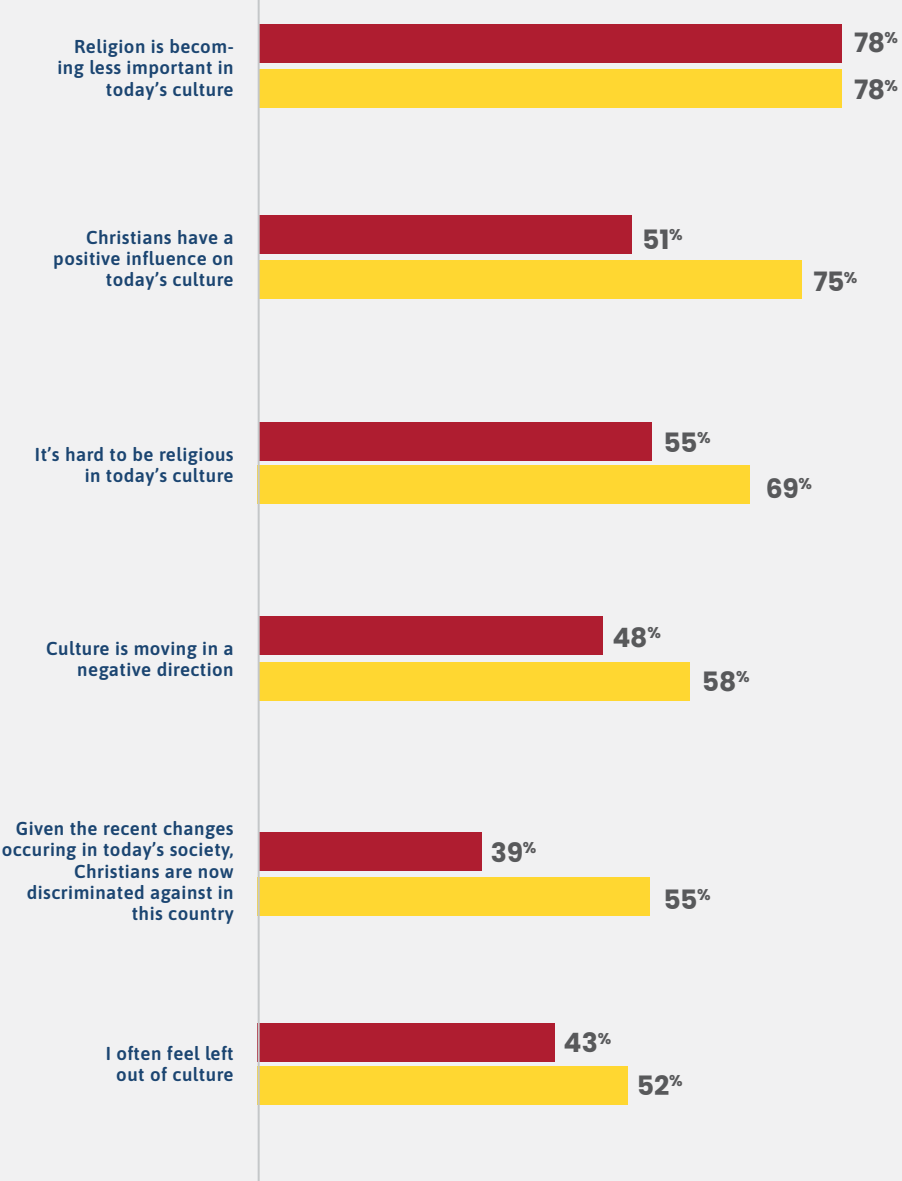
n=376 self-identified Christians ages 18 to 35, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

RELIGION IS BECOMING LESS IMPORTANT & CHRISTIANS ARE FEELING LEFT OUT

Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements

% who agree strongly or somewhat

● All Canadians ● Christians



n=1,014 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 10 April - 30 April 2021.

Worship Practices & Perceptions

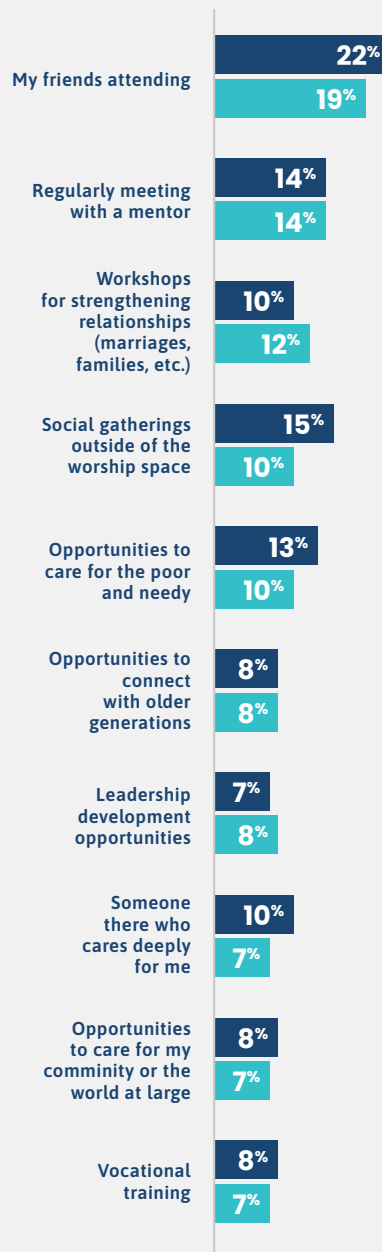
WHAT DRAWS RESILIENT DISCIPLES AND WHERE HABITUAL CHURCHGOERS CAN GROW

Why do resilient disciples in Canada continue to attend their place of worship? Learning about God and commitment to their faith top their list of reasons.

For the resilient disciples, friends are the primary thing missing from their church. Habitual churchgoers also desire to attend with their friends, in addition to hoping for social gatherings, opportunities to serve the poor and a sense of being cared for by others. ●

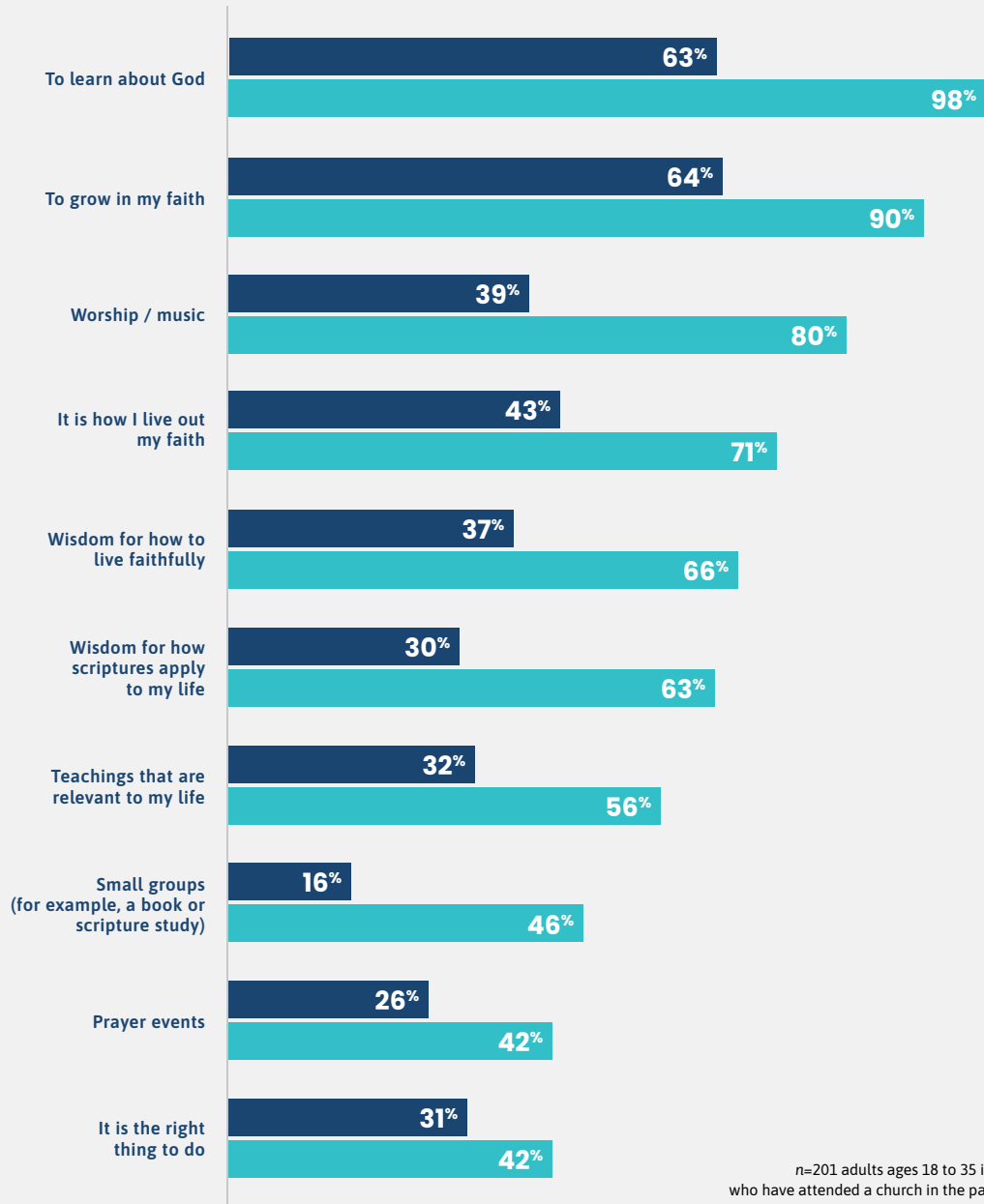
WHAT YOUNG ADULTS SAY IS MISSING FROM WORSHIP COMMUNITIES

● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



WHY YOUNG ADULTS PARTICIPATE IN WORSHIP COMMUNITIES

● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



n=201 adults ages 18 to 35 in Canada who have attended a church in the past month, 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

FIELD GUIDE 2:

Engagement with Spirituality & the Church

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH

In the first part of this field guide, we explored how a lack of connection may contribute to the anxiety that many young adults feel. We also looked at how your community could offer a real and authentic source of connection and hope to young adults.

Now comes the difficult part: making a case for young adults that there is value in being associated with a place of worship in the first place. Field Guide 2 will help you think through some practical steps your church can take toward this end.

Guiding questions

Before you dig into this field guide, consider the following questions as a team:

- What is the perception of our surrounding culture toward Christianity? Do the findings of the study we just read about match our ideas of that perception? How are they similar or different?
- Do you think young adults' ambivalence or negative feelings toward religion and Christianity is fair? Why or why not? How has the Church in your culture contributed or defended against those feelings?
- How is your church equipped – or not equipped – to minister to and foster reconciliation with those who have been wounded by Christians or churches? With the high number of dropouts in your cultural context, what are some ways you feel your community or the broader church in your society can begin to help in healing the wounds of the dropouts?

Ambivalence ... and antagonism

Many members of this generation show a deep ambivalence toward religion – and in some cases, a deep antagonism. While a majority of young adults says they believe in spiritual forces, when that spirituality is tied to a religious group, doubts and opposition crop up. Young adults say the hypocrisy of religious people is the biggest reason they doubt there is anything spiritual. There is even a large minority – roughly one-quarter of young adults in North America – who believe that religion is harmful to people and detrimental to society.

The situation for churches is even more stark when it comes to trying to address people who grew up in the Christian faith but have left, or those who don't attend church very often despite identifying as Christian. This group views the Church as politically problematic, judgmental and insulated from real problems in society. Church teachings, likewise, are considered flawed or insufficient.

The reality is hard for many churches. Yet there are still steps you can take to help the young adults in your midst seek and know God.

An unfair responsibility

Addressing church wounds is never easy. A person might have burdens from a different tradition or theology you personally find abhorrent; there might be hurt from a situation that is completely indefensible. You and your church might be made a scapegoat for the sins of others, and that will feel unfair.

But it's also an opportunity to show how the Church works. As a global body, every Christian expression is responsible for fostering reconciliation for past sins.

You might not have the same theology or church polity as the churches you see have truly hurt people, but you do have a responsibility to work toward making things right with those willing to listen in your context or circle.

Think about how your community can repent for the sins of the global Church. Think about what seeking reconciliation and asking forgiveness looks like (and how it may look different from place to place). And then do the hard work of continuing that ministry each day, as you continually follow the sanctifying power of the Spirit.

Disliked for the wrong reasons

There are plenty of ways that churches in any culture will stand in opposition to some surrounding cultural values. A community of peacemakers seeking to do justice, show mercy and walk closely with God will naturally fall outside the norm! Yet many young people are suspicious of Christianity for reasons beyond the gospel. Some of this is theological variance; some of it is carelessness. Often churches are unclear in their treatment of issues that need to be dealt with with deep sensitivity. Work on your church's words and deeds. Make sure that when you hear opposition, it's because your community is following Jesus, not because people think you believe something you don't.

Help people find what they're missing

Even the young adults who are active and happy at churches still report some things they miss. And these aren't just preferences – going to church without any friends or family for support is hard! Where can you easily offer new opportunities for young adults to find community and connection in your church? ●

HOW CAN YOUR CHURCH IMPROVE ITS:

Social gatherings?

Support groups?

Vocational training?

Opportunities to connect?

SECTION THREE

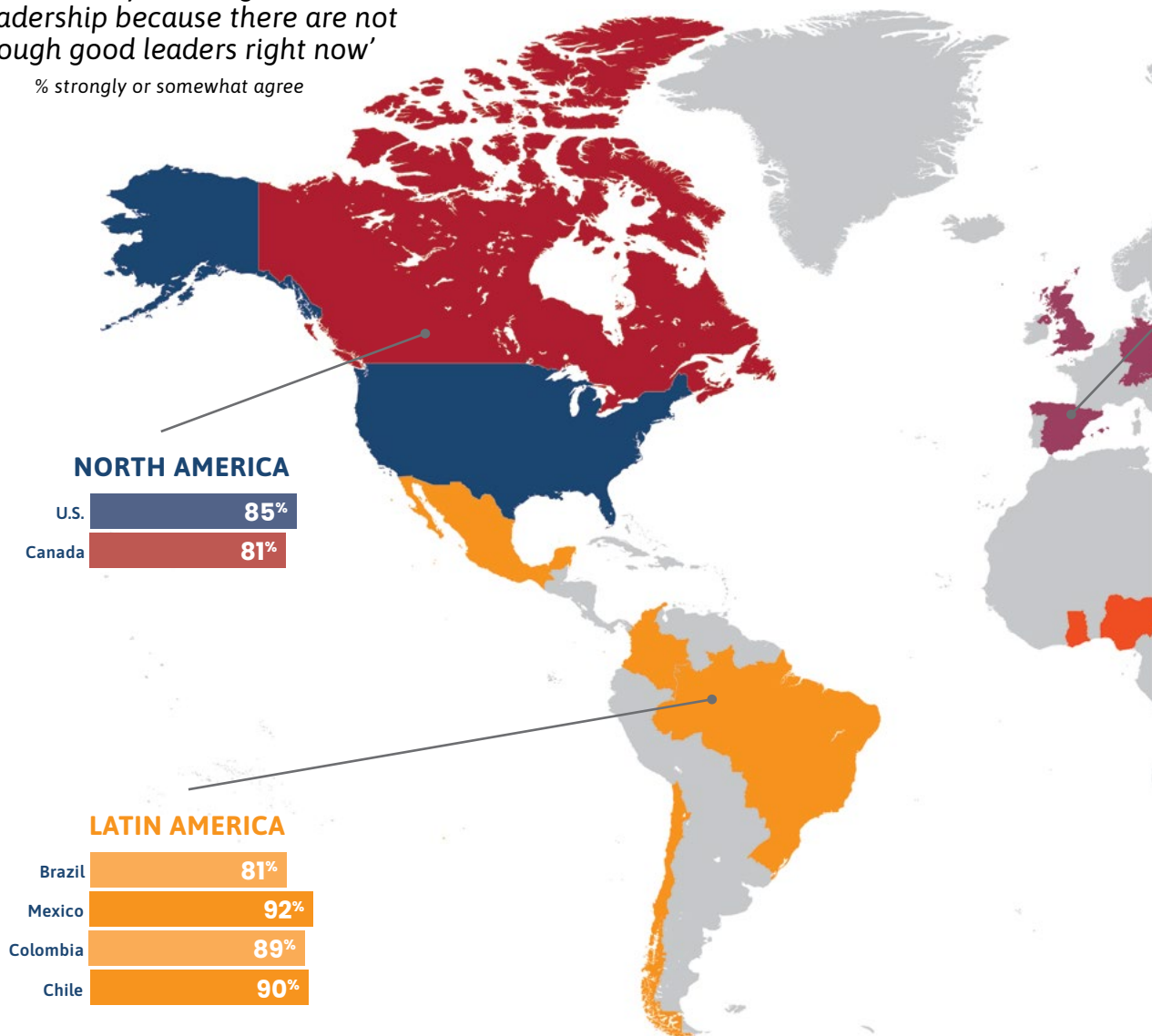
POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

DISCONTENTMENT WITH THE STATE OF LEADERSHIP

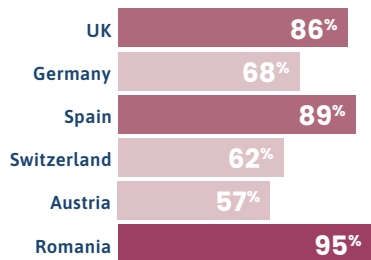
0-69 70-79 80-89 90-100 %

'Our society is facing a crisis in leadership because there are not enough good leaders right now'

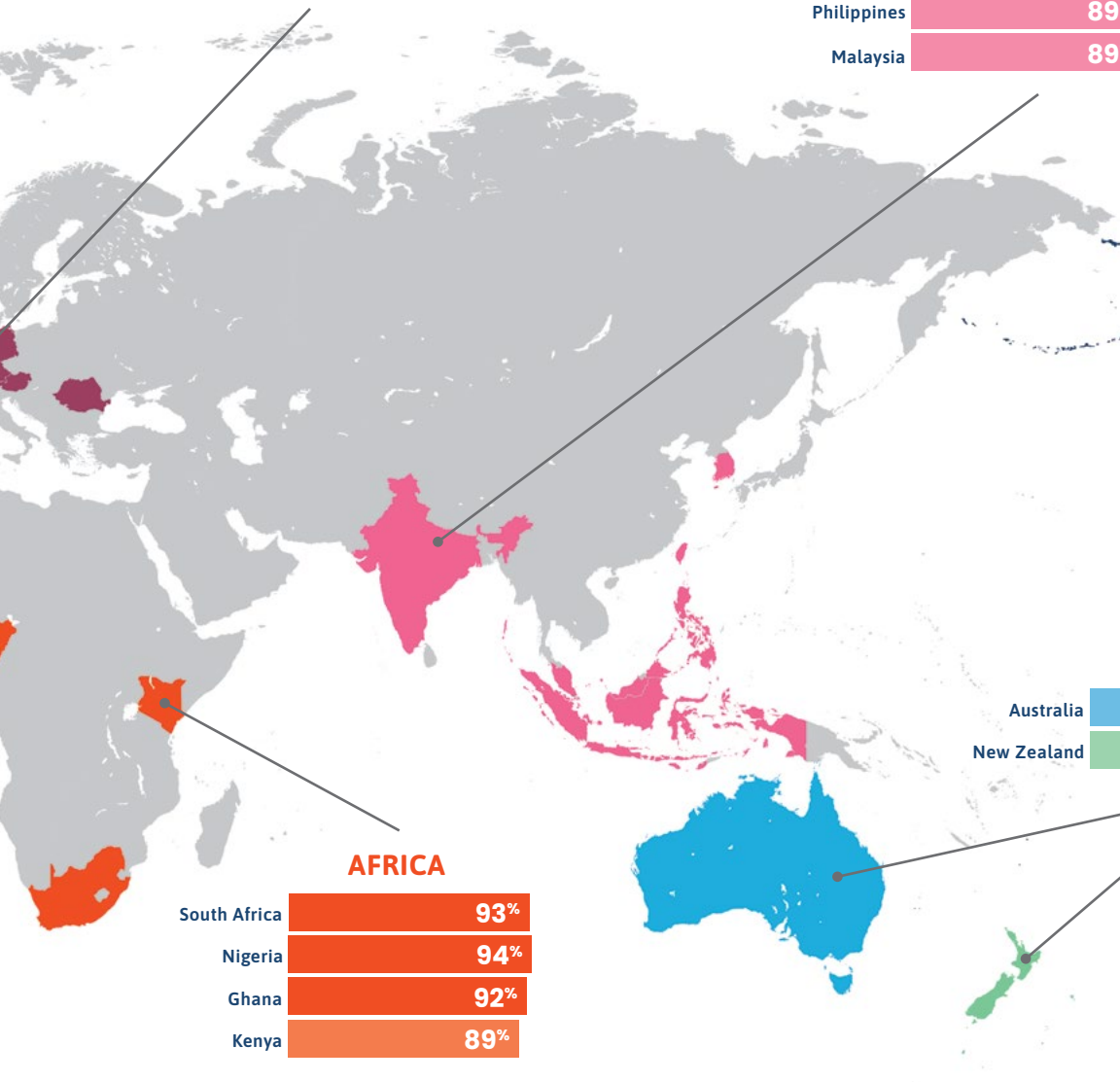
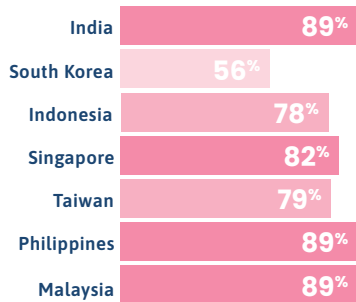
% strongly or somewhat agree



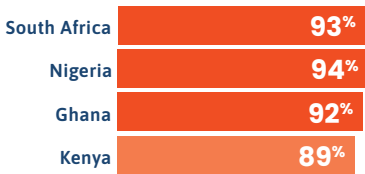
EUROPE



ASIA



AFRICA



OCEANIA



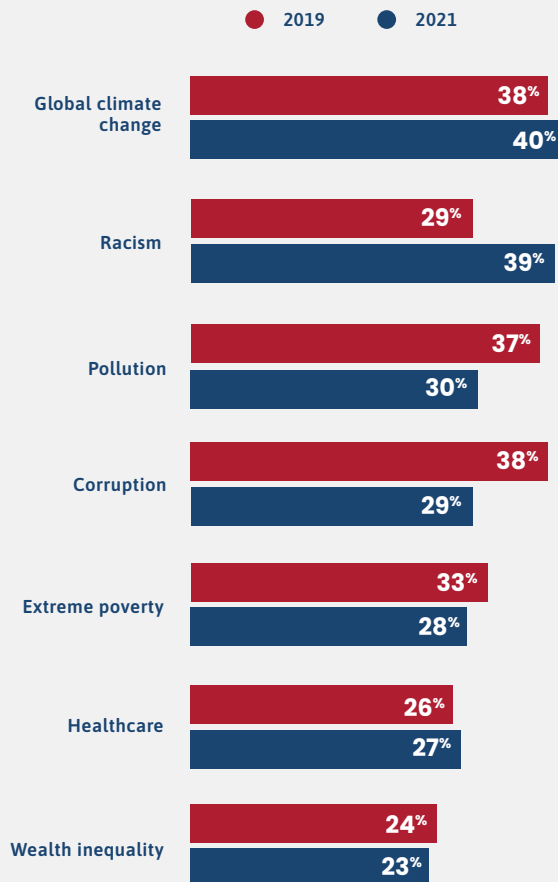
n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35, 4 December 2018 - 15 February 2019.

Global Concerns and Generosity

Although Millennials' overall fears for the future have stayed consistent since 2019, the data reveal that racism has risen as a priority. Corruption, however, is not as concerning as previously reported.

Churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike would prefer to attend a church that supports social justice, gender equality, personal freedoms and racial justice. Looking specifically at where non-churchgoers and churchgoers diverge reveals what Millennials outside of the Church are uniquely concerned about. ●

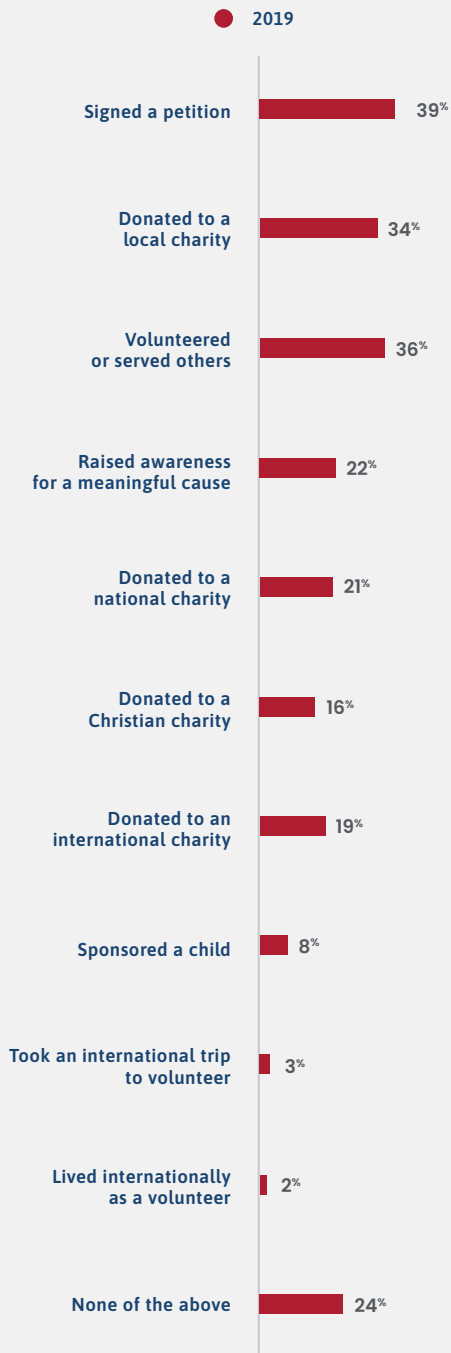
FEARS ABOUT THE WORLD'S FUTURE



CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS JOIN THEIR GLOBAL PEERS IN IDENTIFYING CORRUPTION, GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION AS SOME OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES.

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

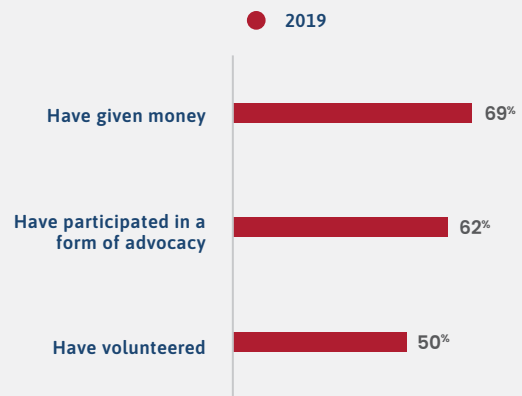
'In the last three years, I have ...'



THE CHARITIES YOUNG ADULTS ARE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING



PARTICIPATION IN CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

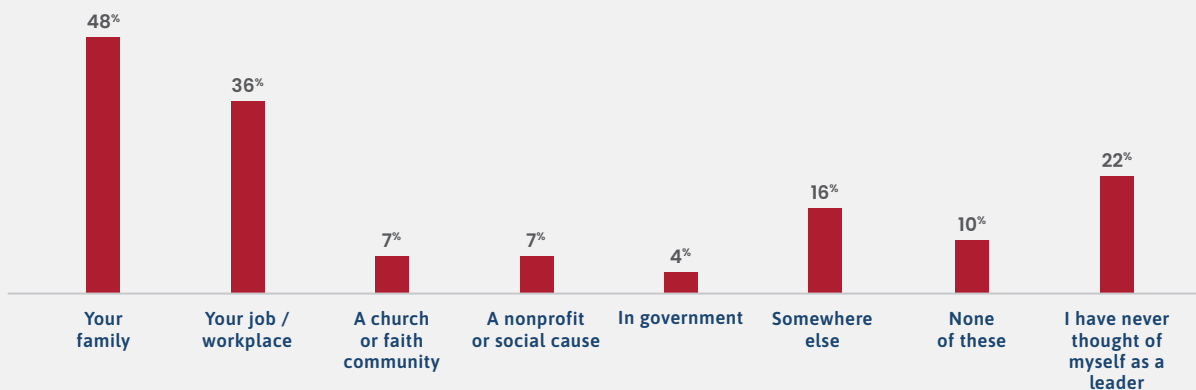


The Changing State of Leadership

CHALLENGES YOUNG ADULTS PERCEIVE AND HOW THE CHURCH CAN OVERCOME THEM

In an effort to better understand, disciple and empower young adults – representatives of the present and future of leadership – we asked them what they identify as barriers to leadership, in both local and global contexts. ●

WHERE DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A LEADER?



n=1,000 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35, 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

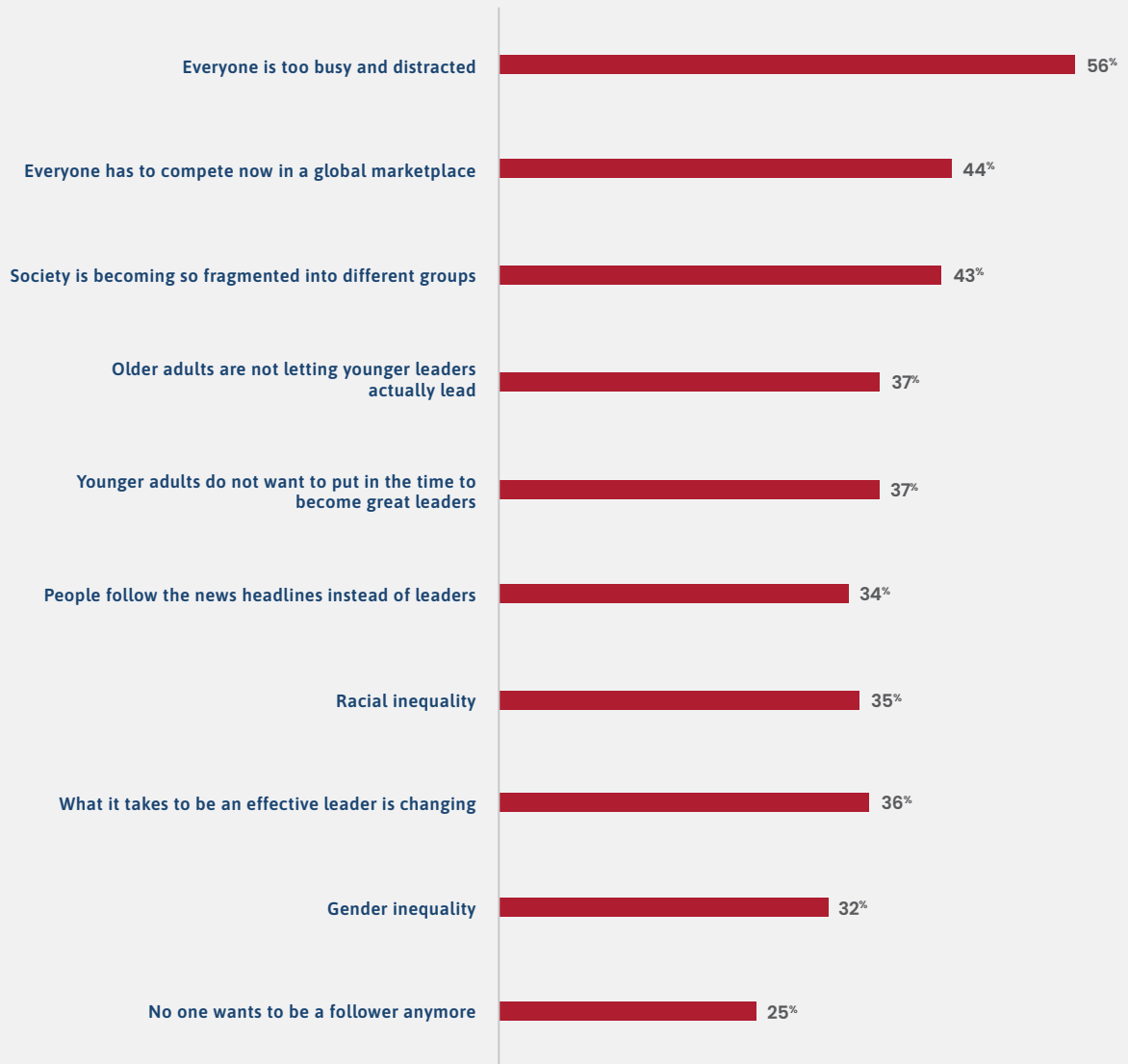
THE CHURCH HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN INSPIRING AND GROWING LEADERSHIP



n=201 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who attend a church at least monthly, 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

BUSYNESS, DISTRACTION & COMPETITION CULTIVATE A WORLD IN WHICH IT'S MORE DIFFICULT TO LEAD

What are the biggest challenges to leadership in society today?



Belief in Action

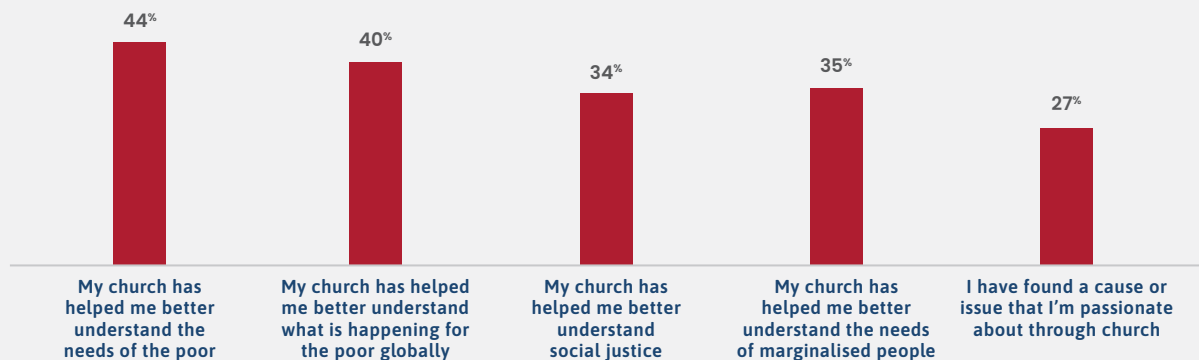
THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND THE POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

The connected generation tells us their world-views inspire or motivate them toward a number of charitable activities or attitudes. A deep faith is often accompanied by strong conviction,

while those furthest from religion are less likely to report altruism and activism.

The connected generation is looking for the Church to provide real, tangible, meaningful, developmental opportunities. As David Kinnaman says, 'They want the Church to be a laboratory of leadership, not just a place for spirituality'. Churchgoers also indicate a desire for faith to intersect with the realities of life and address social issues. ●

THE CHURCH SERVES AS A PLACE OF BOTH FORMATION & ACTIVATION

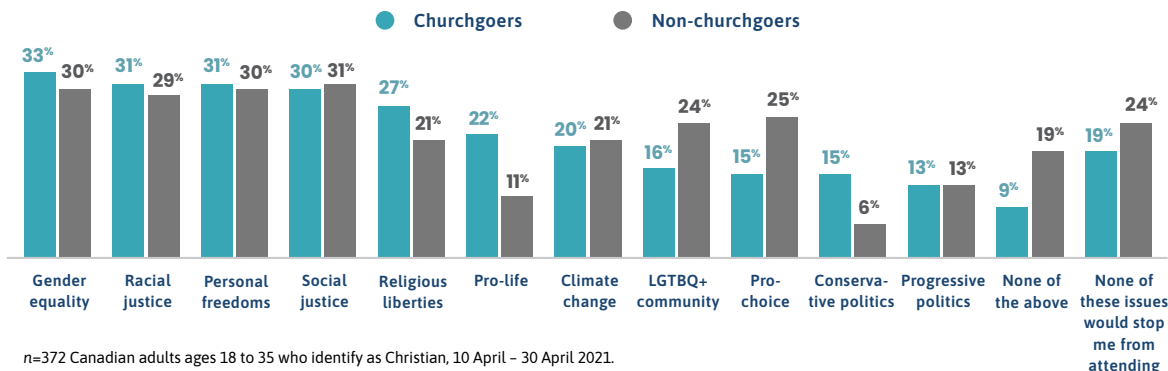


n=201 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who attend a church at least monthly, 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019.

GENDER EQUITY, PERSONAL FREEDOMS & JUSTICE ARE MUSTS IN THE CHURCH

'I will only attend a church that supports...'

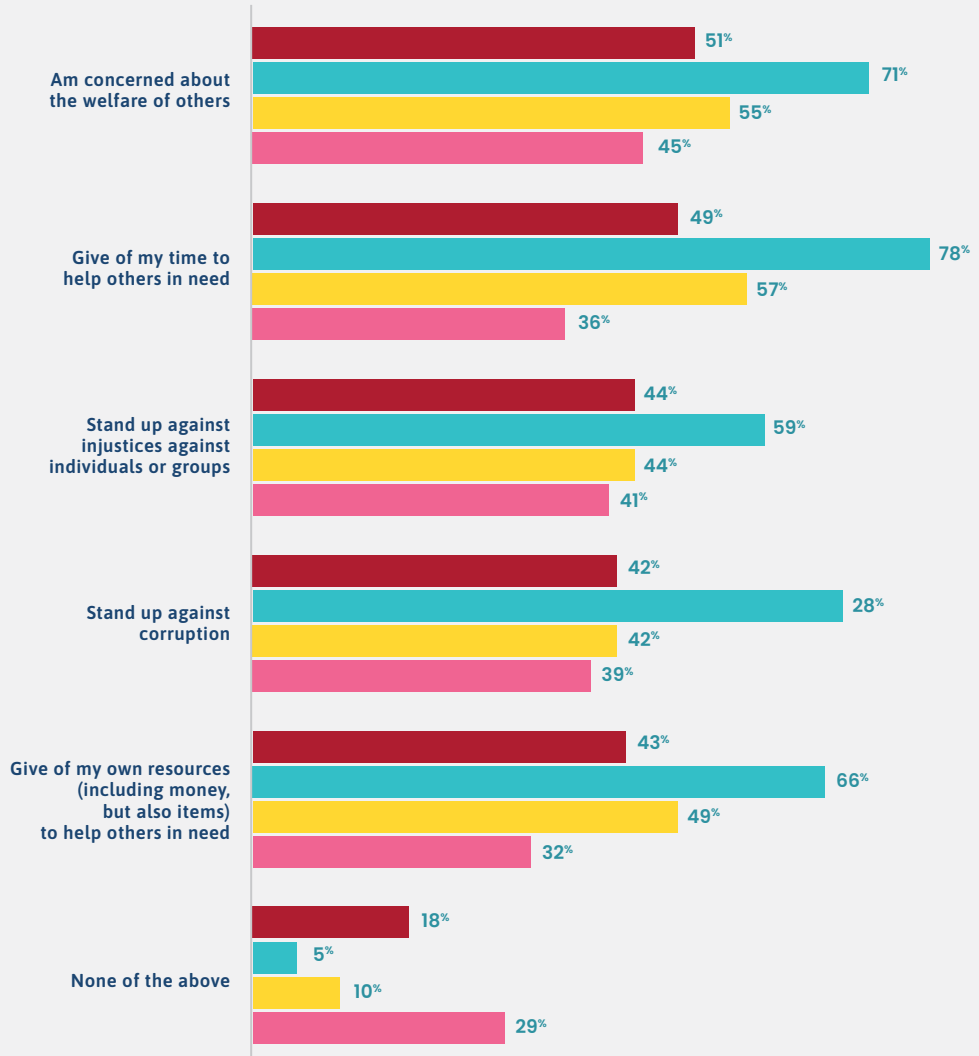
Base: self-identified Christians



n=372 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who identify as Christian, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

'BECAUSE OF MY BELIEFS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT I ...'

● All Canadians ● Resilient disciples ● Christians ● No faith



n=372 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who identify as Christian, 10 April - 30 April 2021.

FIELD GUIDE 3: Potential for Impact

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH

You've seen how and why many young adults in your context have ambivalent and even negative feelings about religion and church. You've heard about a generation wracked by anxiety about the future, and how fostering connection might be a solution to that. But a big question remains: What kind of connection are they looking for?

This generation is clearly engaged (or hoping to be engaged) in making a difference through causes they care about. They show a strong willingness to get involved or even lead when they have a shared sense of mission. Might this be a place of overlap for your community to minister to young adults in your context? Read through this guide as you think about how you can match the passion of young adults in your midst with the call of Jesus.

Guiding questions

Young adults see significant barriers to leadership. And yet, many of them claim to feel like leaders in a variety of contexts.

- As this generation comes into positions of leadership in your culture – and in your church – what are some ways you can begin to address these leadership barriers? How can you connect young adults' passion to address world problems with leadership opportunities?
- What do you think about the link between faith and activism? What would it look like for your church to embrace a God-centred activism? Where do you think there would be gospel-based clarity, and where would the risks be with that mindset?
- Read through the list of concerns 18–35-year-olds say they care about. With the clos-

ing exercise, brainstorm some practical ways that your church might be able to engage with these anxieties.

Action and activism

The data from this survey strongly suggest that young adults in your cultural context have very specific and sweeping concerns – ones shared by other members of their generation around the world. Things like climate change, pollution, extreme poverty, racism and hunger / famine are all major worries for the connected generation. But God's people are meant to be people who care for creation, work to address poverty, oppose racism in all its forms and feed the hungry. Talk as a team about what kind of things you can do in your church to make your Christian commitment to these areas more visible and intentional.

Invite young adults in

One simple way to make these things a priority in your community is to invite the very people who are concerned about these things to be part of the solution. Talk to the young adults in your church – are there any who have a passion for addressing these issues? Are they ready to be a leader in this area?

This kind of invitational leadership can help young adults in your community feel they are overcoming the barriers they see to leadership. It also provides an immediate witness to the surrounding culture: You are saying – rightly! – that God is concerned with the fears expressed by young adults, and that you trust their generation to help bring about God's hope in these anxieties.

Provide a real launchpad

Your church can also help young adults learn how to lead and equip them to lead with success. Consider

forming a mentorship program, connecting older leaders in your church with young adults; work on fostering a vocational ministry that can aid in helping Millennials and Gen Z connect their faith with their work and the things they care about. Learn about the causes they care about and support and release them to form their own communities of action. Remind them – in sermons, prayer and budget – that faith and action are absolutely linked. This may become even more apparent once you begin to develop the young

leaders in your midst. As they do their part to carry out God’s mission in the world, they are demonstrating that the Christian faith is a driving force for robust engagement with important issues. By offering strong formation in how God’s people are commanded to take action in the world around them – peacefully, courageously, compassionately – you’re allowing a leadership platform for young adults who can make a huge difference in the world around them. ●



HOW MIGHT THE CHURCH AND THE WAY OF JESUS OFFER HOPE IN THE MIDST OF THESE CONCERNS?

Climate change

Corruption

Racism

Hunger / famine

Extreme poverty

Wealth inequality

Healthcare

The Post-Pandemic Landscape

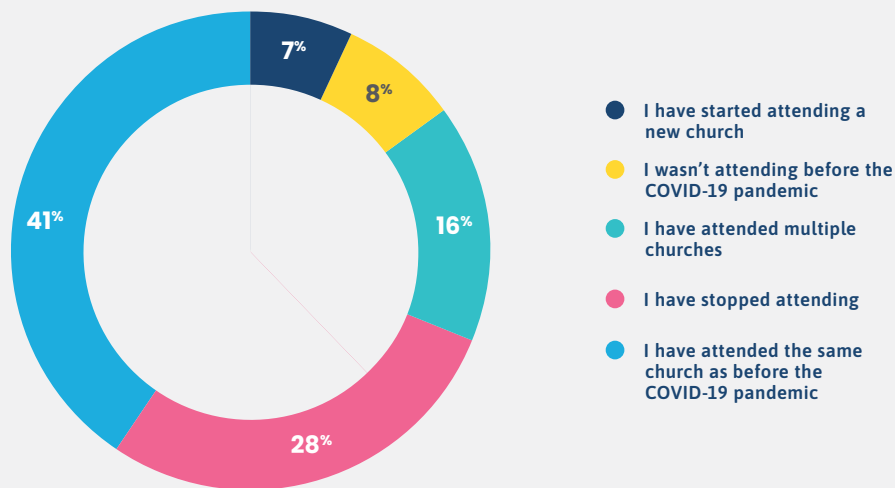
The disturbance brought on by a global pandemic has intensified the rate of change in an already changing Christian landscape. The Christian Church was being disrupted long before COVID-19, but the suffering and separation of the pandemic accelerated

changes. In Canada, only 41 percent of Christian young adults are still attending the same church they attended before COVID-19. Nearly one-third has stopped attending altogether and another one-third is either unsure about their future church engagement or is not returning to church. This data may seem disheartening, but it also emphasises the real needs, experiences and desires of today's young adults.¹

CHURCH ATTENDANCE HAS BEEN DISRUPTED

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, either online or in-person, which of the following most accurately describes your church attendance?

Base: self-identified Christians



n=290 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who identify as Christian, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

CHRISTIANS IN TRANSITION ARE SEARCHING FOR QUALITY

'Do any of the following describe why you have changed churches since the COVID-19 pandemic?'

Base: Christians who changed churches during the pandemic



n=67 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who have changed churches during COVID-19, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

MANY DISLIKE DIGITAL CHURCH AND OTHERS WERE ALREADY LOSING INTEREST

Which of the following describes why you have been attending Church services less often since the COVID-19 pandemic ?

Base: Christians who indicated that their church attendance has declined

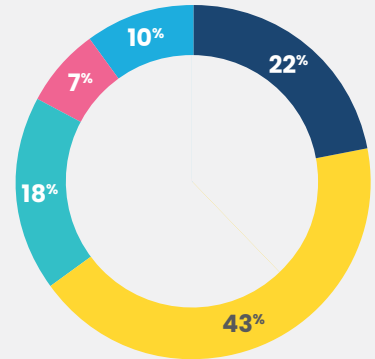


n=82 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who have stopped attending church, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

ONE-THIRD OF THOSE WHO HAVE STOPPED ATTENDING IS EITHER UNSURE OR IS NOT RETURNING TO CHURCH

After the COVID-19 pandemic, do you intend on returning to church?

● Definitely ● Most likely
● Not likely ● No ● I have not decided



n=82 Canadian adults ages 18 to 35 who have stopped attending church, 10 April – 30 April 2021.

Local Faith Leaders Comment on the Findings



For me, what's been really helpful is to get curious instead of defensive. *Tell me more, help me understand.* And that's been a real help because then that tension becomes an invitation to try some things and to get to know people better instead of this defensive posture of trying to fix everything by yourself. So that's been a real key for me: to get curious about what's really happening and where people are really at. The second thing is something that's always been present in my life: I'm a speaker. It's what I do, I love to preach. And I've realised that the most transformational impact that I've seen in people's real lives has always happened through relationship. This is a real struggle for me as a preacher, because of course I spend a fair bit of time and energy in speaking, but actually I have more transformational impact locally in having people over for dinner. I'm curious if this generation's biggest need is a relational connection, if we need to spend a lot less time on dogma and Bible teaching and speaking and a lot more time connecting.



DANIELLE STRICKLAND

Spiritual leader, justice advocate, communicator, peacemaker



FATHER JAMES MALLON

Founder of Divine Renovation, Episcopal Vicar for Parish Renewal and leadership support for the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

We talk about being in a post-Christian culture. We have that very much in Canada and not just post-, but anti-. That's the air we breathe, it's the water kids swim in. It's probably never been a more difficult time for teenagers to try to be faithful. The best way, in the long term, that we can do things for young people is to do things for their parents. There might be an age group or a certain number of young people who you're simply going to lose. But if you start getting a culture of evangelising parents, then there's a whole group of young people coming up who are going to grow up in a different environment.

Only 7 percent of Canadians see the church as a place where they can lead. That finding hit me hard, but I also think it explains a lot.

As the study shows, Canadian young adults are much like our U.S. neighbours and not that dissimilar from our global counterparts—nobody in the connected generation seems that engaged in church leadership. Culturally, Canadians are even more post-Christian than Americans, less likely to be married, a little more anxious and a shade less hopeful—which means the conditions to share the gospel are actually quite great.

Among Canadian Church leaders, I often pick up on cynicism, a scarcity mindset and a *can't-do* attitude that erect artificial barriers that don't need to be there. And yet, I also see a growing pocket of thriving Canadian churches led by next-generation leaders who are making an impact that few could only imagine a decade ago. Christ-centred in their theology, unapologetic about the gospel and deeply committed to reaching post-modern, post-Christian young adults, they're doing what too many Canadians think is impossible: leading thousands of people to Jesus in a deeply post-Christian culture.

As this new day dawns, there is ample opportunity for everyone with a heart for the gospel.



CAREY NIEUWHOF

Founding pastor
Connexus Church,
author and speaker



DAVID KINNAMAN
President at Barna Group
UNITED STATES

What Now?

BY DAVID KINNAMAN

For years now, the Barna team has gone to great lengths to listen to the stories and experiences of teenagers and young adults across the religious spectrum. We've been interested in every aspect of their lives, trying to put the scraps of evidence together to form a coherent picture for Christian leaders to understand and respond to. Now we've added more than 16,000 interviews from 25 countries to the core body of Barna's next-gen research.

Through our careful listening, we've come to hold several core convictions about the connected generation:

- They are misunderstood by older generations of Christian leaders.
- They are coming of age in a radically different context, one that could be defined as *chaotic*.
- Their skepticism is giving way to indifference – a much more intractable problem.
- The challenges and opportunities of discipleship are more complex.
- They are hungry to see courageous leaders in all facets of society.

We must slow down and listen to a generation that is too often talked *at* and talked *about*. We must stop ignoring or dismissing teens, twentysomethings and thirtysomethings who are coming into their own. They are desperately in need of a wise, compassionate, listening ear – and *we* are desperately in need of their partnership as we look to the Church's future.

Cultivate Resilience

Start with resilient disciples. Their faith is much more than what happens in church – though, among the majority, church experiences certainly have much to do with it. More than half say they were 'very active' in practising Christianity in their teenage years (56%), compared with 29 percent of other self-identified Christians (nomads and habitual churchgoers). They also tend to strongly agree they had adult, non-family friends in their church when they were growing up (61% vs. 29%), so parents and grandparents weren't their only models of adult faithfulness.

For faith to grow, church must be the place where young Christians practise following Jesus *alongside other believers* who help them discover how to bring faith into every area of their lives.

Where to start?

1. **Be encouraged.** Young resilient Christians *can* be found in your context. What

can you do to learn from them, to invest in them – not just to solve problems, but to journey together and launch them into their God-ordained destiny? Don't simply try to attract young Christians; engage them in the work. It's not church *for* them. It should be church *with* them.

2. **Understand your context.** Take stock of your surrounding religious climate. What are the forces at work that arrest or accelerate disciple-making where you are? Be ready to adapt your methods and priorities accordingly.
3. **Measure the right things.** You get what you measure. How do you measure effective discipleship? What metrics are you using to evaluate the kind of disciples your ministry is cultivating?
4. **Search the scriptures** for inspiration about the kind of resilient people God is calling us to be. Stories of exile are the place to start: Daniel, Esther, Joseph, Jeremiah, 1 Peter – the biblical witness of faithfulness in exile is a reliable guide for resilient faith.

Raise up Godly Leaders

Some leadership qualities and principles are timeless and rise above cultural or generational differences: honesty, integrity, conviction and courage, to name a few. But other ideas about what makes a good leader are not always applicable everywhere to everyone. Problems with and barriers to leadership often differ, as well. 'Leadership' is a concept highly shaped by culture. For instance, some societies value leaders who exhibit individual merit, personal ambition and orientation toward the

future; others esteem leaders who prioritise continuity with the past and handing traditions and ways of life down from elder to younger.

Whatever your cultural milieu, commit yourself to investing in tomorrow's leaders. What kind of leaders are we hoping to be – and hoping young Christians will become? Here are four aspirations, whether we are part of the connected generation or simply cheering them on. ***We aspire to be and to form leaders who are:***

Connected to God. Our identity is grounded in Jesus and we bring a God-centred presence to a self-centred age.

Connected to ourselves. We are humble, sacrificial people of peace. We reject wrong ideas about leadership and influence that say our worth is what we create and our influence equals the size of our platform. We are conscious of the relentless pull toward anxiety and make deliberate choices to live in sync with an unruffled, unharried, Godward rhythm.

Connected to others. We are emotionally connected to others in our communities and in our households. We have a healthy connection to those we lead, which is neither cold and detached nor codependently enmeshed.

Connected to the world. We are informed about the major problems facing societies, personally impacted by the needs of others and seeking opportunities to serve as agents of godly change. We are courageous and empowered to seek God-honouring solutions.

Even as the world spins toward an uncertain future, these kinds of people can make a difference – as God intends all leaders to do. ●

Methodology

This study is based on online, representative public opinion surveys conducted by Barna Group. A total of 16,383 respondents ages 18 to 35 across 25 countries were surveyed between 4 December 2018 – 15 February 2019 and 10 April – 30 April 2021. Sample distribution based on continent and country is shown below.

North America	• Indonesia (500)	• Spain (500)
• United States (2,000)	• Singapore (500)	• Austria (500)
• Canada (2,014)	• Malaysia (250)	• Switzerland (500)
Africa	• Taiwan (300)	• Romania (251)
• South Africa (750)	Latin America	Oceania
• Nigeria (512)	• Mexico (500)	• Australia (1,021)
• Kenya (300)	• Brazil (1,005)	• New Zealand (567)
• Ghana (462)	• Chile (300)	
Asia	• Colombia (300)	
• South Korea (500)	Europe	
• India (500)	• United Kingdom (1,100)	
• Philippines (250)	• Germany (1,001)	

Unless otherwise noted, all data referenced in *The Connected Generation* were collected by Barna, among a nationally representative sample of the population identified. For this study, Barna relied on online collection methods, including mobile phone users.

The study used online national consumer panels that are representative by age, gender, region and ethnicity. Respondents were fully verified by the representative sample sources. Additionally, quality control measures checked that respondents were completing the survey at an appropriate pace and paying attention to the questions asked.

The survey was offered in nine different languages, (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Romanian, Korean, Indonesian and Taiwanese), translated by a trusted translation service and verified by local partners in every country for context-specific nuance.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base, the *CIA World Fact Book* and available census data from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Chile, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, the UK, Germany, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Romania, Australia, New Zealand,

South Korea, India, Philippines and Singapore, quotas were designed to ensure the final group of adults interviewed in the study reflected each country's distribution of adults nationwide based on age, gender, ethnicity and region.

Online surveys necessitate literacy and an internet connection, which means the sample reflects adults who have those capabilities and does not reflect those who are unable to read or lack connectivity to respond to online surveys. Thus, in spite of a robust methodology, this sample is not meant to be representative of entire national populations, regions, continents or the world. The countries selected for this study were based on countries and regions where Barna and World Vision receive frequent requests for research-based insights. These and other concerns or limitations were respectfully considered while interpreting the data.

The number of resilient disciples surveyed in Canada is somewhat limited, however, we have chosen to report their results here because (1) they are so starkly different from other groups, including habitual churchgoers, and (2) the distinctive trends among resilient disciples is bolstered by the global analysis of resilient disciples across this entire study. In other words, we feel comfortable showing these results, even with sample size limitations, because they represent a much larger global story. ●

Acknowledgments

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About the Project Partners

Barna Group is a research firm dedicated to providing actionable insights on faith and culture, with a particular focus on the Christian Church. Since 1984, Barna has conducted more than one million interviews in the course of hundreds of studies and has become a go-to source for organisations that want to better understand a complex and changing world from a faith perspective. Barna's clients and partners include a broad range of academic institutions, churches, nonprofits and businesses, such as Alpha, the Templeton Foundation, Fuller Seminary, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Maclellan Foundation, Dream-Works Animation, Focus Features, Habitat for Humanity, The Navigators, NBC-Universal, the ONE Campaign, Paramount Pictures, the Salvation Army, Walden Media, Sony and World Vision.

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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. As an international partnership of Christians, World Vision's mission is to work with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God. For nearly 70 years, World Vision has ministered alongside the Church to answer Jesus' call in Matthew 25 to care for the least of these. Together, with churches, their leaders and others, World Vision has impacted the lives of over 200 million vulnerable children by tackling the root causes of poverty.

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